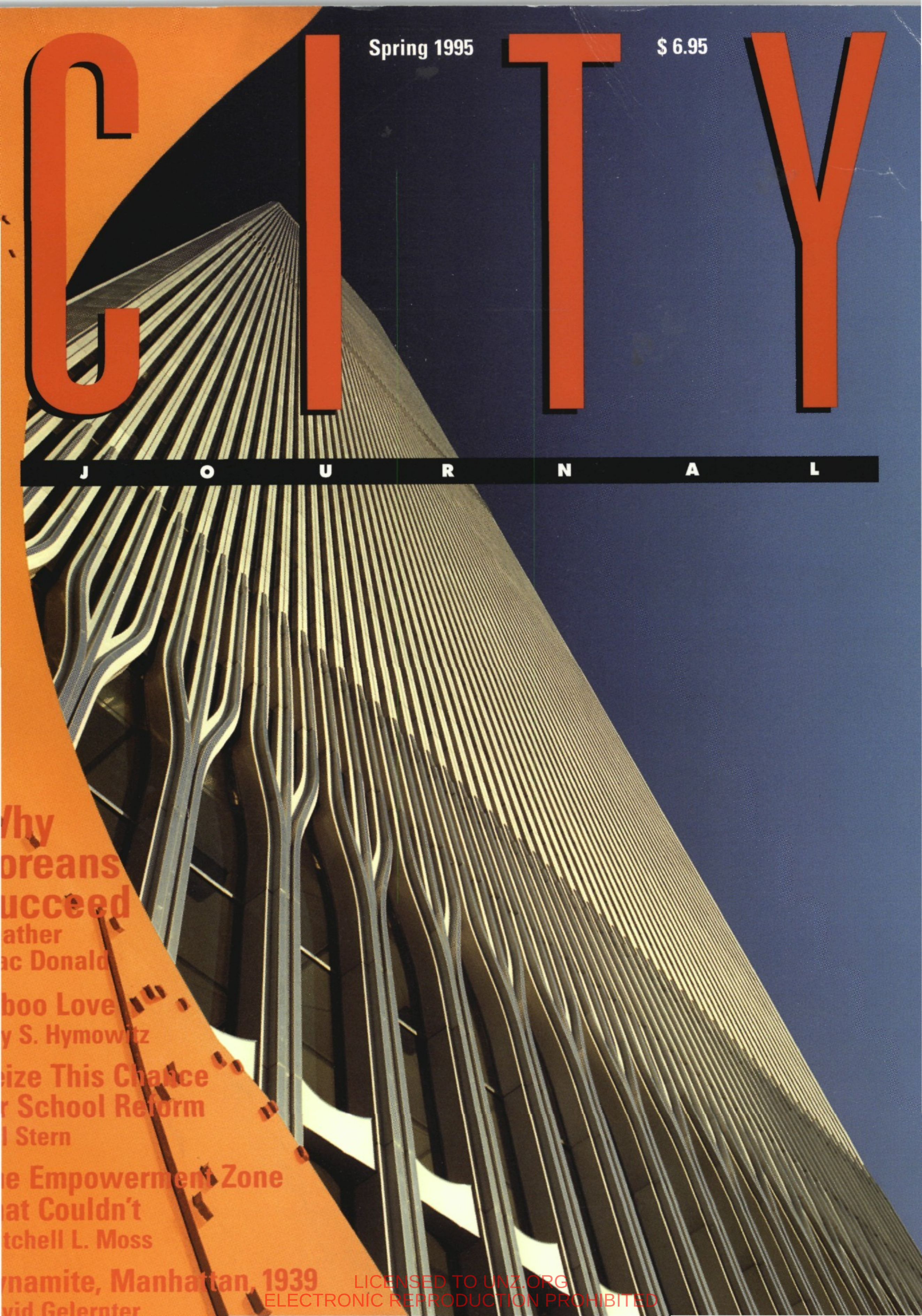
Spring 1995 $ 6.95

CITY JOURNAL



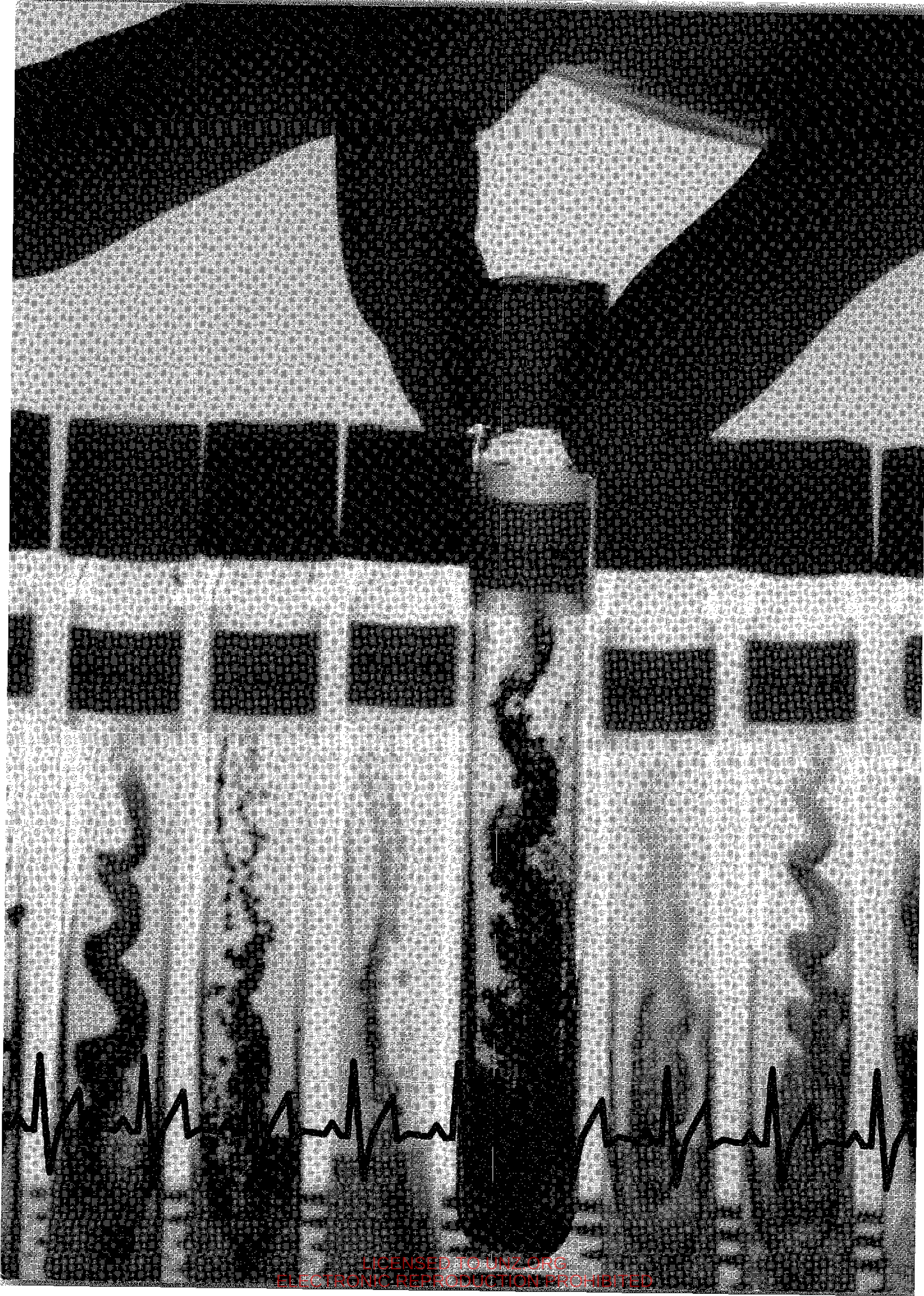
Why
oreans
ucceed
ather
ac Donald

boo Love
y S. Hymowitz

eize This Chance
r School Reform
l Stern

e Empowerment Zone
at Couldn't
tchell L. Moss

ynamite, Manhattan, 1939
vid Gelernter



Before we discovered a formula that worked on life-threatening infections, we tested 3,000 that didn't.

Pfizer Once we uncovered an answer, we didn't stop there. We then tested 27,000 additional formulas to ensure we had the best one. In the end, Pfizer's commitment resulted in a major breakthrough in treating certain infections in people with suppressed immune systems—such as cancer patients on chemotherapy and people with AIDS. With the power of innovation, we can find even more breakthroughs tomorrow. **WE'RE PART OF THE CURE.**

CITY
JOURNAL

Published by the Manhattan Institute
Spring 1995 Volume 5, Number 2

Editor
Myron Magnet

Senior Editor
James Taranto

Contributing Editors
Theodore Dalrymple, Kay S. Hymowitz,
Rita Kramer, Heather Mac Donald,
Roger Starr

Art Director
Sandra Di Pasqua

Picture Editor
Nancy Jo Johnson

Production Manager
Monica Kowarick

Editorial Assistant
Erica Rogers

Publication Committee
Richard Aspinwall, *Chase Manhattan Bank*
Gary Bogard, *New York, N.Y.*
Robert Case, *Smith Barney Shearson*
Geoffrey Colvin, *Fortune Magazine*
E. Virgil Conway, *Financial Accounting Standards Advisory Council*
Edward N. Costikyan, *Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison*
John Craig, *The Commonwealth Fund*
Peter Davidson, *El Diario-La Prensa*
William V. Federici, *The Brooklyn Union Gas Company*
Nathan Glazer, *Harvard University*
Adam P. Glick, *The Jack Parker Corporation*
Edward W. Hayes, *New York, N.Y.*
H. Dale Hemmerdinger, *The Hemmerdinger Corporation*
Steven Klinsky, *Forstmann, Little & Company*
Marie-Josée Kravis, *Hudson Institute*
Roy Marden, *Philip Morris Companies*
Howard Milstein, *Douglas Elliman-Gibbons & Ives*
Joseph L. Rice III, *Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, Inc.*
Peter Salins, *Hunter College*
Joan C. Schwartz, *New York, N.Y.*
Fred Siegel, *Cooper Union*
Thomas J. Tisch, *FLF Associates*
Barrie A. Wigmore, *Goldman, Sachs & Company*
Louis Winnick, *Fund for the City of New York*

Cover Photograph by Jake Rajs

Contents

Heather Mac Donald 12 **Why Koreans Succeed**
Does the American Dream still exist? These New York immigrants say yes. To achieve it, they find, takes the familiar American virtues.

Kay S. Hymowitz 30 **The 'L' Word: Love as Taboo**
There's no shortage of sex in modern life. But love? Today's culture has made it harder to find, with bad consequences for society.

Sol Stern 39 **Let's Seize This Chance for School Reform**
The teachers' contract, a key bar to education reform, is up for renegotiation in New York, and union leaders say they're ready for innovation. Here's how to hold them to their word.

Kenneth Silber 46 **New York's Nightmare Legislature**
Democrats and Republicans in Albany have a deal: don't mess with my spending and I'll leave yours alone. Revolt is overdue.

Carolyn Lochhead 56 **California's Back-to-Reality Welfare Reformer**
With no illusions about her clients, California Social Services Director Eloise Anderson is instituting reforms that make sense.

Lewis Hine 62 **The Empire State Building Goes Up, 1930–31**

Daniel Seligman 70 **A Horseplayer's Line on OTB**
When even customers hate the world's only money-losing bookmaker, it's time to privatize.

Mitchell L. Moss 76 **Where's the Power in the Empowerment Zone?**
Forget the hoopla. New York's version of this federal prescription for ailing cities is a bust.

Urbanities

David Gelernter 82 **Dynamite, Manhattan, 1939**

David Brooks 89 **Out-of-Step New York**

Frances Trollope 95 **An Englishwoman in New York, 1831**

Roger Starr 104 **The Hidden Rooms Behind Museum Displays**

Departments

5 **In Prospect**

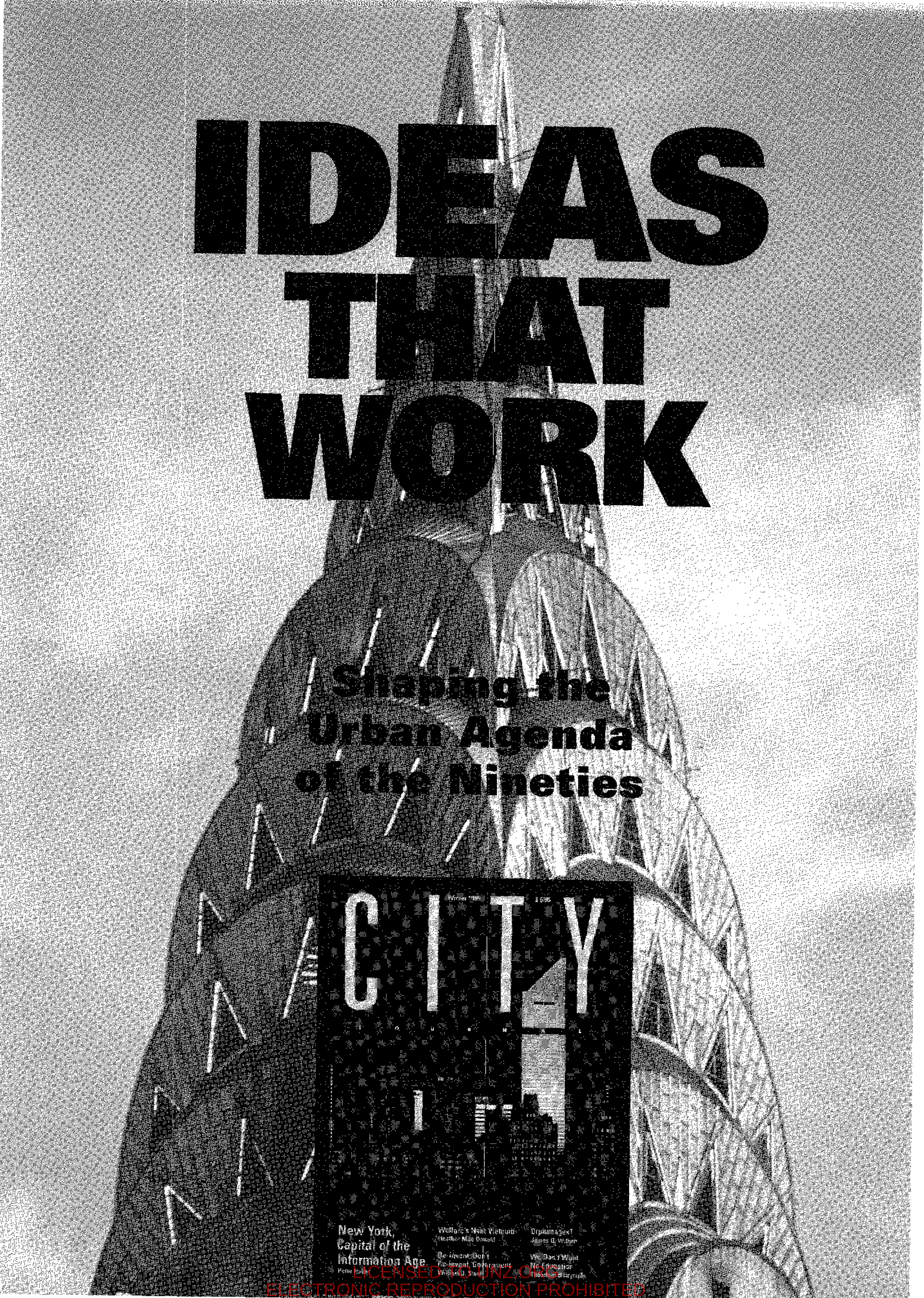
6 **Soundings**
The New Modesty; There Are No Individuals Here; The Denver Boot; The Case of the Hatless Doorman . . . and other matters.

Theodore Dalrymple 110 **Oh, to be in England**
Reader, She Married Him—Alas

116 **Letters**

119 **Contributors**

David Garrard Lowe 120 **New York Diarist**
A Grander Grand Central


IDEAS
THAT
WORK
Shaping the
Urban Agenda
of the Nineties
CITY
JOURNAL
New York,
Capital of the
Information Age
Welfare's Next Vietnam
Heather Mac Donald
Orphanages?
James Q. Wilson
Re-invent, Don't
Re-invent, Government
We Don't Want
No Education

COURTESY: NEW YORK BOUND BOOKSHOP

In Prospect

For lovers of cities, the 1995 New York budget is an epochal event. It raises, in an immediate, practical way, fundamental questions about what cities are for. It waves aside 30 years of settled agreement about the proper relation of the urban rich to the urban poor. No wonder it has caused such an outcry.

The worldview underlying Mayor Giuliani's budget is one *City Journal* shares. It rests on an urban philosophy we have outlined in countless stories. Since all the debate so far over the budget has taken place on the surface, in terms belonging to the old urban paradigm, it's important to step back and clarify just what is at issue.

The budget, critics charge, is "hard" and "mean," its $1.3 billion in cuts falling squarely on the backs of the poor, for whom it will be "devastating." To be sure, since 57 percent of the total cuts will come out of welfare and health care spending, the budget represents not just an across-the-board spending shrinkage or an attempt to make government more efficient but a genuine shift in priorities away from spending on the poor. This is a wise and proper policy choice.

New York City can't afford to spend ten times more on welfare and four times more on public hospitals than typical large American cities. We can't afford to have 21.4 percent of the labor force working for the government and the publicly funded social services part of the economy. The taxes necessary to maintain this level of support are so high that they drive away the businesses that create the wealth necessary to pay for all this.

This problem isn't peculiar to New York. In a global economy, it is a worldwide phenomenon. Industries and capital can now move anywhere, whether to low-tax, low-regulation North Carolina—or to India, with its platoons of low-wage, high-skill workers, from actuaries to engineers. The result is that cities, even countries, that make it expensive or hard to do business are having to adjust radically to the competitive reality. Sweden, with crippling interest rates and a vertiginous budget deficit, is having to shrink its famous welfare state. Germany, with labor costs inflated by costly apprenticeship and unemployment insurance programs, is seeing factories decamp to the lower-cost Czech Republic. Even Japan is having to rethink its lifetime-employment policies, its overmanned factories outgunned by leaner operations elsewhere. Around the world, economic pressures are eroding corporate and government welfarism, and New York isn't exempt.

But, it is said, New York is losing the traditional generosity that made it special: according to a *New York Times* report, "Mr. Giuliani may have placed in jeopardy the city's soul, the urban largesse that has defined New York and made it the world's destination." In fact, what made the city a magnet to the poor was precisely the opportunity its vigorously expanding economy held out, not a system of support for the unproductive. Its generosity consisted of a free school system that provided all children with the training to seize opportunity in an open economy. It consisted of an excellent, free college, so that talented poor kids could rise as high as their drive would take them. It consisted of parks and libraries, of a police and legal system, that belonged to them as well as to the rich. All this largesse, by cultivating the city's human capital, augmented rather than diminished the common wealth. By contrast, a contracting economy deprives the poor of the opportunity that is the most precious gift cities give them.

America has redefined generosity to the poor during the last 30 years, and mounting failure and social pathology among the beneficiaries of the modern welfare system—while the immigrant poor untouched by that system succeed—suggest that kind of largesse has done more harm than good. Treating the poor as victims rather than as equal citizens disables people from taking advantage of opportunities, it turns out. Beginning to dismantle that system is a step toward strengthening the kind of community in which the poor can put their poverty behind them. ●

Soundings

The New Modesty

Selling the public on bigger government is easiest during times of war: this premise has driven our political rhetoric for decades. Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty; Jimmy Carter called the gas shortage "the moral equivalent of war"; and Ronald Reagan waged war on drugs.

Today Americans are increasingly skeptical of government crusades, liberal or conservative, and political rhetoric is beginning to reflect this change in mood. Consider Mayor Giuliani's State of the City speech, which put illegal drugs at the top of his administration's agenda. The mayor chose his words carefully: "We'll call our effort a strategy, not a war," he said. "I don't like wars on poverty or wars on drugs, because I think wars fool people. You can't have unconditional victories against poverty or against drugs. When people see that your efforts fall short, they become disillusioned by government."

Such disillusionment doesn't mean that Americans have become libertarians: we still want government to address social problems. Accordingly, Giuliani said his strategy will aim "to reduce the problem of drugs, to save young people, to make it a lesser problem. Maybe we'll achieve more that way than by promising something that we may not be able to achieve." Such modesty about government's ability to solve problems may ultimately make for more effective government. —*James Taranto*

There Are No Individuals Here

Concern for the underclass has prompted a growing body of vivid, finely observed journalistic works about the inner city, including Daniel Coyle's *Hardball*, Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here*, and Leon Dash's series of *Washington Post* articles about Rosa Lee Cunningham, a drug-dealing mother of eight. This troubles journalist Michael Massing.

"These works," Massing acknowledges in *The New Yorker*, "are thoroughly good-hearted, full of solicitude and compassion for America's disadvantaged." But, he argues, they share a fundamental flaw: they present their subjects as individuals rather than objects of social and economic forces beyond their control. We do not learn "what transformed" Paul, father of the two boys in *There Are No Children Here*, from a productive workingman into a deadbeat addict or what "broader forces" impelled Cunningham's decline. Without "discussing socioeconomic realities" to explain "how [the subjects] got that way," Massing objects, the authors leave us with mere "morality tales—political parables about the risks of illegitimacy, the dangers of drug abuse, the perils of irresponsible parenting."

Never mind that these "tales" and "parables" are true. Like a member of a diversity committee in search of role models, Massing examines these works to see how their authors "portray" or "depict" African-Americans. "As for the fathers, most seem to be in jail, on drugs, or dead," he objects about *Hardball*. "One of the few black men portrayed sympathetically is an umpire named Anthony Garrett." By the end of the book, however, Garrett has been arrested for shooting a teenager. The sympathetic depiction up to that point, Massing concludes—as if the writer were imagining rather than recording a life—was "all just a setup."

Massing cannot quite believe these works, because they don't confirm his preconceptions. He himself demands parables over reality—tales that would show individuals as frail reeds blown about by the winds of change. "Perhaps," he writes, "the authors respect their subjects too much." For all his ostensible concern, Massing apparently believes that underclass individuals have no volition and little to tell us.

—*Kay S. Hymowitz*

Pound Foolish

Opponents of Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani's proposed welfare and Medicaid cuts predictably complain that the cuts will visit much hardship on New York's poor and vulnerable. But they also make another, more curious argument. They claim that such cuts are ill-advised because every dollar that the city or state spends on welfare and Medicaid brings with it a matching dollar from the federal government—unlike expenditures on services such as police or schools. In other words, by cutting welfare and Medicaid, the city and the state are about to throw away billions in federal aid.

This argument is profoundly wrongheaded, but it goes a long way toward explaining why New York got so deeply invested in these programs in the first place. Decades ago, when Washington offered these categorical aid programs on a "buy one, get one free" basis, leaders in both city hall and Albany eagerly bought up the whole store, thinking they were getting a terrific deal. Bargain-hunting in Washington's half-price social-policy market, successive city and state administrations signed on to the most comprehensive array of welfare and Medicaid benefits available and made the largest possible number of New Yorkers eligible for them.

Even at half price, this has turned out to be no bargain. With New York's investment in these programs more expensive than any other state's, the mayor and the governor find they have no alternative but to slash their costliest budgetary sectors. New York's leaders have long fooled themselves into thinking they were getting a good deal; now they find they've merely stuck themselves with a ruinous bill.

—*Peter Salins*

Negating Affirmative Action

It's just possible that 1995 will see the beginning of the end of affirmative action. Certainly we are about to enjoy a third opportunity to disengage from the divisive policies of race and sex preference fastened on America for the past quarter-century. The first two opportunities were lost by timidity. In 1978, in his pivotal opinion in the famous *Bakke* decision, Justice Lewis Powell tried to split the difference, endorsing some racial preferences while deeming others unconstitutional. In 1985, President Reagan abandoned a campaign promise and decided not to revoke the Johnson-era executive order that had established racial preferences in government hiring and contracting.

ANDREW BORDWIN (3)

Today, however, affirmative action is suddenly vulnerable. The Clinton administration has stirred opposition by taking a hard line in favor of preferences, most notably in a New Jersey case in which it is supporting a school district that laid off one of two equally qualified teachers purely on the basis of race. A 1996 California ballot measure will give voters a chance to repeal affirmative action statewide; early polling indicates that preferences will lose big. The Republican landslide produced a congressional leadership ready to move against preferences, the traditional defenders of affirmative action are momentarily disorganized, and President Clinton has zigzagged, ordering his own review of federal programs in an effort to limit Democrats' political exposure on the issue.

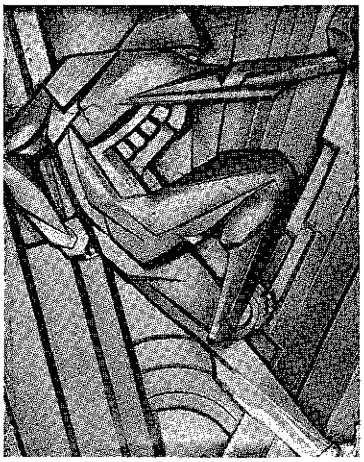
Across the country, it's beginning to sink in that programs and practices sold as temporary remedies are on their way to becoming permanent features of the American landscape. This situation is untenable, since the majority of Americans agree that non-discriminating colorblindness is the only truly just principle, even though the elites may disagree. The dangerous temptation for opponents of preferences will be to settle for half-measures under the false flag of "moderation." "Let us get rid of the worst abuses," it will be urged, "but continue to allow some preferences in order to create diversity." This won't work: as long as managers of companies and institutions are under pressure to produce "results"—that is, to show that "enough" minorities or women have been hired, promoted, or admitted—they will do whatever is necessary to keep their numbers up. Small preferences will become as large as they need to be. As a practical matter, there is no such thing as a little bit of affirmative action—and no substitute in a democracy for individual, merit-based decision making.

—*Richard E. Morgan*

The Denver Boot

Ruben Perez, an assistant principal in Denver, took extreme action against chronic troublemakers at Horace Mann Middle School: last December he summarily suspended 97 of the school's 795 students while his boss, principal Martha Guevara, was out of town. Unsurprisingly, his actions drew a quick and hostile response from school bureaucrats—along with intense sympathy from a public fed up with discipline problems in the schools.

District superintendent Irv Moskowitz suspended Perez but quickly rescinded the order when it provoked widespread protests. Not only did teachers at Horace Mann don black armbands in solidarity with Perez, but district and local media offices were flooded with phone calls backing Perez and denouncing the superintendent. District officials tried to portray Perez as an unstable publicity-seeker, but he came across in interview after interview as composed and purposeful. He had resorted to a mass suspension, he explained, because other methods of discipline weren't working. Too many teachers complained of classroom harassment, fighting, cursing, and a host of other disruptions by a minority of repeat offenders. They readily fingered the 97 students Perez suspended.



The school district's response was denial. Moskowitz commissioned a study, completed in February, which concluded that standard discipline procedures were both fair and sufficient. But Denver residents know better. Like many urban districts, Denver has hemorrhaged middle-class students over the past 20 years, its total enrollment slipping by one-third. Even a city councilwoman pulled her nine-year-old daughter out of the district recently, after a teacher told her that the girl, who had been victimized by bullies, needed to "toughen up." Because parents are properly indignant about violence and disorder in the schools, they made Ruben Perez an overnight hero.

—*Vincent Carroll*

With Friends Like These . . .

The crack epidemic has wreaked havoc on New York City's public housing. "Tenants are afraid to go into their buildings," says Diane Jackson, a tenant leader and 24-year resident of Brooklyn's Cooper Park project. "Drugs are dealt 24 hours a day; robberies and assaults are up; dealers have commandeered elevators and lobbies."

But according to the Legal Aid Society, such perceptions are the product of "exaggerations in the media." In a legal battle that pits Legal Aid against the poor people the government pays the organization to represent, Legal Aid is arguing that drug-related crime in the projects is no worse than it was a quarter-century ago.

At stake is the procedure for evicting drug dealers from housing projects. In 1971 the Housing Authority signed a consent decree in a Legal Aid Society case, requiring the authority to complete a byzantine administrative process before it can bring any eviction motion to court. The case was one of many—including, most prominently, the 1970 Supreme Court ruling in *Goldberg* v. *Kelly*—in which the courts imposed severe administrative burdens on government agencies that dispense benefits and services to the poor. In this case the decree created a process that can easily last two years, as drug dealers conduct business as usual.

In August 1993 the Housing Authority moved to modify the decree, seeking the power to bypass the administrative process and go directly to court when a tenant is suspected of dealing drugs from his apartment—as any other private or public landlord in the state can already do. The Legal Aid Society immediately opposed the request, denying the authority's assertion that an increase in drug-related crime had caused serious deterioration in the quality of life in the projects. Legal Aid filed its objection on behalf of all public housing tenants, though it had consulted none.

Elected tenant representatives, with the aid of the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities, are now seeking to join the Housing Authority as plaintiffs in the suit, arguing that Legal Aid is not representing their interests. Tenant leader Jackson, for one, wonders "who the Legal Aid Society thinks they're helping." She has an idea, however. Legal Aid lawyers, after all, represent residents in the very administrative procedure the society is seeking to preserve. Says Jackson: "Legal Aid is looking out for its own jobs."

—*Heather Mac Donald*

Titticourt Follies

A year ago lawyer William Kunstler announced that a form of insanity called "black rage" had driven his client, Colin Ferguson, to murder six Long Island Rail Road commuters in December 1993. It was a pathetic gimmick that would have served neither his client nor justice. But amazingly, that turned out to be one of the less bizarre aspects of the surreal odyssey that was the Ferguson trial.

On December 9, 1994, Nassau County Judge Donald E. Belfi ignored the findings of a defense psychiatrist and found Ferguson fit to stand trial. Defying common sense, Judge Belfi declared that Ferguson could assist in his own defense, even though the defendant, whose coherence waxed and waned, refused to cooperate with his lawyers.

Then Judge Belfi allowed Ferguson to act as his own attorney. The judge granted Ferguson his request for $300 to hire a private investigator to track down the white man who Ferguson said was the true killer. (Belfi did, however, deny Ferguson permission to subpoena his would-be star witnesses—President Clinton and former Governor Cuomo.)

As Ferguson examined witnesses—including people he had shot and wounded—he asked pointless, rambling questions. His fantasies flowered to encompass the police and the prosecutor, whom he accused of a racist conspiracy to frame him. He said that the Jewish Defense League was planning to kill him in prison: "The Jeffrey Dahmer incident was not a coincidence. He was set up as a prelude against me. There's a conspiracy to murder me if I'm convicted." Judge Belfi, who presided patiently day after day, finally told the defendant on February 16 that unless he could produce his own witnesses, the jury would begin deliberating the next day.

On February 17 the jury convicted Ferguson on 6 counts of second-degree murder and 19 counts of attempted murder. Ferguson then brought the case full circle, announcing that he will appeal the verdict with the help of William Kunstler—who will argue that his client was never competent to stand trial in the first place. (Kunstler did, however, declare that "black rage is no longer an issue in this case.")

A little perspective is in order about who is most to blame for this farce. It was Judge Belfi who, by allowing Ferguson to stand trial, made a mockery of forensic psychiatry and who, by allowing Ferguson to defend himself, made a mockery of his courtroom. When the issue of competence comes around once more, Colin Ferguson is not the only one who should come up for review. *—Sally Satel*

The Case of the Hatless Doorman

New York City landlords can get into trouble with the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) if they subject tenants to a "reduction in service" as a way of getting around rent regulation. But often the definition of a reduction in service ranges from the trivial to the absurd. Dust balls under a radiator in an outside hallway? A scorch mark on a kitchen countertop? The doorman no longer wearing a hat? All these are real cases from DHCR's files. In each one of them, a hearing officer ruled that the tenant had presented a valid complaint and ordered a rent rollback.

Not only does DHCR seem to have no way to distinguish a trivial complaint from a serious matter—cutting off heat or refusing to replace a broken window, for example—but its examiners and hearing officers also frequently define as a "reduction in service" a condition that had existed long before the complaining tenant moved in. In a Manhattan case, DHCR granted a rent rollback (now under appeal) after tenants complained about the heavy iron front door—"the same door that had been there for 50 years," notes Blaine Schwadel, the owner's lawyer.

Will the DHCR mend its ways under the Pataki administration? Spokesman Louis Ganim promises that his agency will try to handle complaints in a way that is "more responsive and less costly to all involved." A good way to start would be to issue explicit written guidelines spelling out what constitutes a reduction in service, then summarily dismissing frivolous complaints.

—Charlotte Allen

A Vicious Cycle

Is permanent dependency the rule among welfare recipients? Those who answer no point out that roughly half of all women on welfare are off the rolls within two years. But research conducted by economist LaDonna Ann Pavetti, now with the Urban Institute, paints a more complicated picture. Pavetti examined 11 years of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and extensively interviewed single mothers, both current and former welfare recipients. She found that welfare recipients commonly follow a pattern she calls "cycling"—moving on and off the welfare rolls repeatedly.

Pavetti's data show that getting off welfare is easier than staying off. Almost 40 percent of women who leave welfare for work return to the rolls within one year; almost 70 percent are back on welfare within five years. Women who escape welfare for reasons other than work—marriage or help from relatives, for instance—have similarly high rates of return.

What drives women back to welfare? The most common answer Pavetti's subjects gave was simple economics. Not that AFDC is particularly generous, but the cornucopia of other benefits—food stamps, rent subsidies, and health insurance—makes life on welfare more attractive than off. All of which argues for restraining the growth in benefits and for gradually, rather than abruptly, reducing benefits when a welfare recipient finds a job. *—Richard Miniter*

America's Parking Ticket Capital

Washington, D.C., has one of the worst-run city governments in the nation (see "At Home with Big Government," *City Journal*, Summer 1993). But there's one thing the District does with stunning efficiency: writing parking tickets. In 1992, District employees wrote 2,122,456 tickets, about four for every man, woman, and child living in Washington. A total of 43,206 cars were booted or towed to impound lots. And the city did this with only 113 full-time ticket writers, each required to fulfill a quota of about 90 tickets a day. Although the average parking control aide made out one ticket every five minutes, some are high achievers: during a single month in 1992, according to *Washington City Paper*, meter man Tyrone Tucker wrote 3,010 tickets, more than one every three minutes.

Why the zealous enforcement? Parking tickets are a gold mine for the D.C. government. Averaging $20 apiece, Tucker's month of tickets meant potential revenue of more than $60,000. During 1992 the District collected more than $58 million in parking fines—millions more than it raised through its lottery. Federal Express alone paid $1.2 million for D.C. parking tickets.

Local politicians long ago realized that such a reliable cash cow was too important to entrust to a sloppy, inefficient local government. Instead, collection of parking fines is farmed out to Lockheed Information Management Services, the company that was at the center of New York City's Parking Violations Bureau bribery and favoritism scandals in the Koch and Dinkins administrations. But the District ignores the question of whether it's appropriate for the government to enforce laws simply to make money. Indeed, less than a month after taking office, Mayor Marion Barry presented his plan for closing the District's budget gap, now estimated at more than $700 million. Prominent among the suggestions: more parking fines. —*Tucker Carlson*

An Essential Service?

With budget-cutting fervor sweeping the country, colleges and public schools are scrimping for books and classroom space. Will this new parsimony spell doom for state-supported radical multiculturalism? Unlikely. The last-minute reprieve of the New Jersey Project by Republican Governor Christine Todd Whitman illustrates just how ineradicable the multicultural bureaucracy has become.

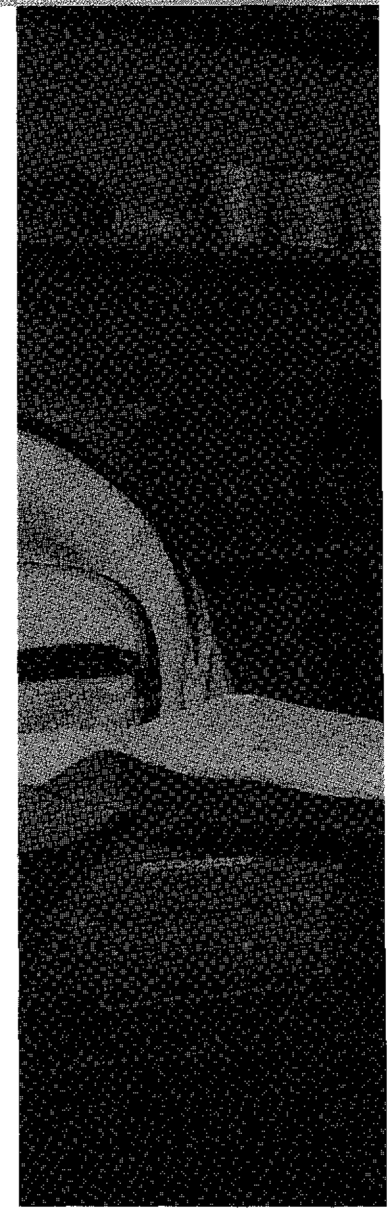
Since 1986 the New Jersey Project, based at William Paterson College in Wayne, New Jersey, has led the national movement for "curriculum transformation"—the infusion of race, sex, and class into every aspect of the humanities curriculum. The project supports local efforts to revamp teaching materials and provides guidance to educators throughout the country on how to remove "white male bias" from the classroom. The director of the New Jersey Project, Paula Rothenberg, who describes herself as a Marxist-feminist, argues that the traditional humanities curriculum builds "racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class privilege into its very definition of 'reality.'"

The project has received millions of state tax dollars. But when the New Jersey Legislature abolished the Department of Higher Education last year, funding for the project vanished with it. Rothenberg, however, immediately mobilized supporters to lobby legislators and Governor Whitman. At the 11th hour, the governor found $100,000 for it in her discretionary fund, reserved for emergencies. Whitman's actions may merely reflect ignorance of Rothenberg's aims, but they also suggest how powerful the multiculturalism industry now is.

The New Jersey Project's budget for 1996 is again in dispute. But Rothenberg and her allies have managed to define their divisive work as part of the basics, on an equal if not superior footing with algebra and history. It's time for political leaders, educators, and parents to take a far more skeptical look at multiculturalism.

—*Heather Mac Donald*

Why Koreans Succeed



Does the American Dream still exist? These New York immigrants say yes. To achieve it, they found, takes the familiar American virtues.

Heather Mac Donald

Kyung T. Sohn was one of the first Korean greengrocers in New York City. A 1968 forestry graduate of the University of Maryland, he was unable to find a job in his profession. So in 1975, using $5,000 his brother had saved, he bought out a retiring Italian grocer in the northern Bronx. "I didn't know what romaine was," recalls the affable, pear-shaped Sohn. He asked the former owner to stay on as a wage worker for two months and teach him the business. Sohn bought a truck and learned the daily grind, rising at 2 AM to go to the Hunt's Point wholesale produce market in the Bronx, going to bed at 11 PM. His wife worked by his side.

Two years later he gave the store to his brother and bought one in Kew Gardens, Queens. A year after that, a friend asked him to take over a store in Jamaica, Queens, for $8,000. In 1981 and 1982, Sohn sold the two stores for nearly $200,000. By then he was operating the city's first Korean "cram school" for boosting test scores.

Such unflagging enterprise, multiplied many times over, has powerfully boosted the economy of New York City. The Korean deli turned the traditional produce store—previously the province of Italian- and Greek-Americans—into an art form and put New York's shabby supermarkets to shame. Korean-Americans opened stores in inner-city neighborhoods that other retailers had long shunned. And when Wall Street boomed in the eighties, Koreans and other immigrant entrepreneurs worked around the clock providing services to the financial industry.

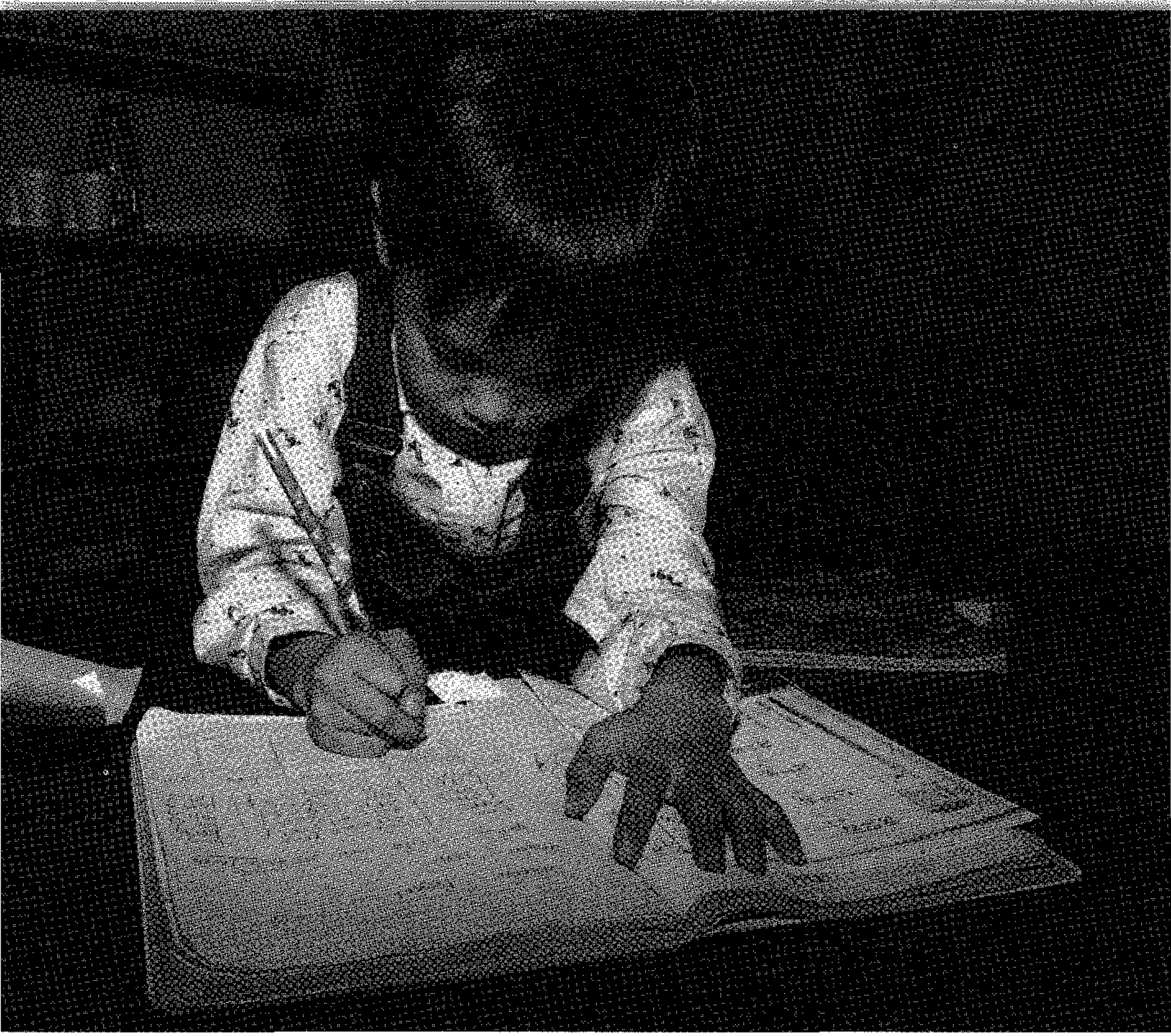
Korean-Americans have proved that the American Dream is still alive. "If ever I want to know where the American work ethic went, I know where to find it," says Stephen Solarsh, a business and real estate consultant who has advised dozens of Korean-American business owners. "The Koreans just keep moving in a wonderfully disciplined way. Anyone who sees them can think back to the time when our forefathers came to this country."

The Koreans' success in New York and across the country provides a partial blueprint for how we can rebuild our cities. But of

---

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.

Photographs by Nancy Jo Johnson



Two ingredients of Korean-American success: a focus on children and on education.

late New York's Koreans have experienced some economic and cultural jolts that make clear just how big the task of building the urban future will be.

Sitting on the balcony above their sparkling new deli on Third Avenue and 43rd Street while their two-year-old daughter scrambles up and down the stairs, Doug and Haesu Choi reflect on their life in New York. As for many Korean-Americans, that life has alternated between unstinting cooperation and cutthroat competition with other Koreans.

Haesu Choi, a statuesque woman with short straight hair framing an angular jaw, moved to New York with her family in 1975. Haesu's brother built a supermarket empire in Brooklyn that at its peak comprised five stores. Doug Choi, lanky and soft-spoken in a black leather jacket and black aviator glasses, spent 12 years in the U.S. Army as a field nurse.

A few years after their 1983 wedding, the Chois started a produce business in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Unable to get a bank loan and fed up with the red tape for a G.I. loan, Doug invested his $20,000 Army savings in two *gaes*, Korean communal savings pools. At each monthly meeting of a *gae*, members contribute whatever they can afford, usually $400 to $500. One person draws the pot, based on a list made up at the start of the *gae* and on how much the recipient has contributed. There is no interest on the loan, but whoever collects that night buys dinner for the 20 to 30 members.

Stephen Solarsh says he has never seen Koreans use bank loans or other conventional financing. The *gae* has become less common today, however, since many immigrants now bring money with them from the sale of a house in Korea or from personal savings. The Chois raised much of the $75,000 they put into the produce store from the *gae*. Haesu's family contributed the rest. Haesu's brother helped Doug learn the business. Working an 18- to 20-hour day, they just covered the rent on their store and apartment.

Having started their grocery business with help from other Koreans, the Chois soon encountered the second face of Korean business experience: ruthless Korean competition. A recent immigrant opened a produce store almost next door, igniting a brutal four-month price war. "We don't mind working hard," says Doug Choi, "but every day, we were selling 36 boxes of very good cantaloupe at a negative price margin." News spread quickly. "Everyone in Hunt's Point knew," he explains. "They said: 'Hey, there's a price war in Bay Ridge. We don't need to go to Hunt's Point; we'll just buy there!'" The Chois tried unsuccessfully to reach an agreement with their competitor. "Finally I burned out," says Doug. They sold in 1988.

The Chois next opened a stationery store on Second Avenue and 94th Street in Manhattan, but the business suffered from a dismal economy and the lack of a stable client base. In 1993 a friend asked them to take over his Lexington Avenue deli in trouble with the Health Department. They jumped at the opportunity and gave their stationery business—with no strings attached, they say—to Byong Lim, a friend from Maryland.

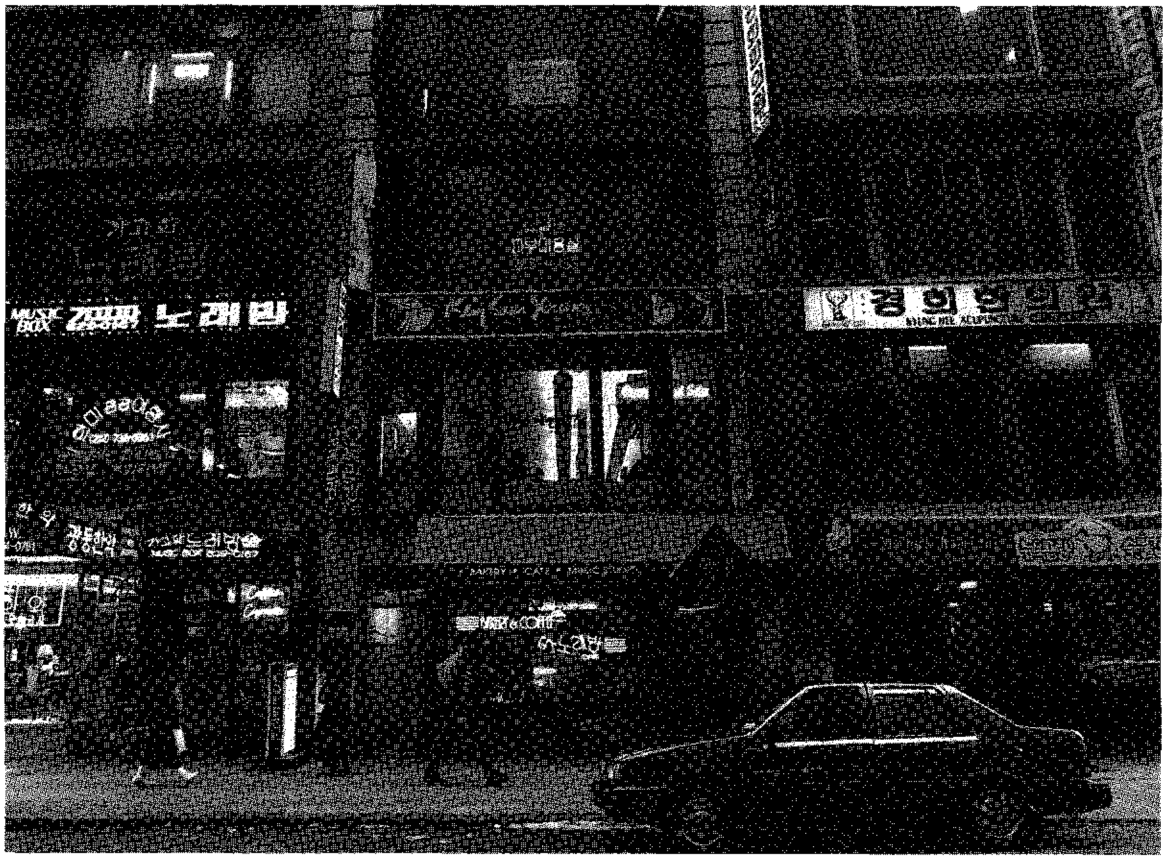
Once the Chois stabilized the deli, however, the previous owner wanted it back, leaving the Chois unemployed for six months. Donations from friends and family poured in—$500 here, $2,000 there. Eventually the Chois borrowed $65,000 from three *gaes* enabling them to open their deli on Third Avenue in September 1994. They also owe $50,000 on 15 credit cards for equipment. With weekly revenues of $15,000, "we are just standing still. Every penny, we put back in," says Doug. "But we have to succeed because of all the people who put their trust in us and tried to help," explains Haesu.

The Chois' business experience in New York is typical. Korean-American small business is fluid and dynamic: businesses often pass between friends and family; owners who take a loss at one location try again in another. This give-and-take reinforces the mutual obligations that knit the Korean community together.

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, 28 percent of Korean-American men and 20 percent of Korean-American women own their own business—the highest rate of entrepreneurship in the country. Census data put the rate of self-employment among Koreans in New York City at 14 percent. According to the Korean-American Small Business Service Center, Koreans own 85 percent of produce retailers, 70 percent of independent grocery retailers, 80 percent of nail salons, and 60 percent of dry cleaners in New York City. The Korean food business in the New York area has sales of $300 million annually, according to the Federation of Korean Food Businesses of Greater New York.

The flowering of Korean enterprise in the United States defies most theories of immigrant entrepreneurship. Unlike what Harvard sociologist Nathan Glazer calls the "great migrating nations" of Jews, Chinese, and Italians, the Koreans have no tradition of wandering the world as commercial middlemen. Indeed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while commerce and banking flourished in China and Japan, these Asian neighbors viewed Koreans as neither industrious nor intelligent.

Korea's official support for Confucianism, which disdains commerce, did not end until 1972, when military dictator Chung-Hee Park declared it contrary to the goal of economic development. Yet Confucianism gave Koreans one trait that



Korean-American enterprise has restored West 32nd Street to life.

would both propel them to the New World and ensure their success here: a passion for education. "Our main concern?" asks Doug Choi. "Education—Number One quality. Most people, that's all they think about. Even if you mop floors or work as an auto mechanic, if you have an education, you will be better."

In Korea this commitment to learning results in close to a 100 percent literacy rate and a nearly comparable high school graduation rate. Yet the government allows only 30 percent of high school graduates to enter a university. Competition is ferocious. The primary reason why Koreans emigrate to America is to ensure a place for their children in college, preferably Harvard or Yale—household words in Korea.

Many Korean immigrants have sacrificed white-collar or professional careers, difficult to pursue here because of language and licensing barriers. Often a grocery cashier or dry cleaner is a former engineer or nurse. Retailing requires little English: "There's no need to communicate," says Doug Choi. "If you have good products, the customers know."

Few Korean immigrants had any previous retailing experience. A 1983 survey of 40 New York greengrocers by Philip Young of Pace University found that only 20 percent had run a business in Korea, none in the produce area. Ninety-five percent had college degrees—a level of education that sets Korean immigrants sharply apart from traditional immigrant entrepreneurs. Koreans' advanced degrees make up in part for their lack of business experience. "Why have a master's in engineering to succeed in produce?" asks Young. "Because small businesses require a lot of thinking to plan and organize."

Abandoning white-collar professions imposes psychological costs: in Korea, as here, status differences between professionals and shopkeepers are sharp. Some Korean-Americans are bitter that after so much hard work in the United States, their social status isn't higher. Others hold tight to their former professional identity. Bokyung Kwon, a pharmacist in Korea, opened One Merchandise, a variety store on Broadway at 98th Street, when she got to the city. "I always felt I was a pharmacist," she says of her ten years selling handbags and mufflers.

The Koreans have followed the time-worn formula for immigrant success—grueling hours, a willingness to work for low wages or profits in hopes of success later, and the extensive use of family labor, essential in a highly competitive market. "If you use someone else's labor," explains Kyung T. Sohn, "your profit goes out as wages." Of the 40 greengrocers Philip Young surveyed, all but three employed family members.

Families work together for non-economic reasons too. For the past two years, Yo Chung, 24, has managed a produce store in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Though he graduated from Queens College in computer science, he didn't even look for a computer job: he wanted to work with his 61-year-old father, a former engineer, who sits outside, watching the store. "My father could not work

Lunchtime at Doug and Haesu Choi's deli on Manhattan's Third Avenue and 43rd Street.

alone," Yo explains. "People do not want to hire older people, and he does not speak English."

Devotion to family is part of the "social capital" that Koreans have brought to America. Parents sacrifice for their children and expect them to reciprocate. "My sons are doing well," says Doug Choi with pride. "I may not be doing so well, but they go to a good school. That's all that matters." Jane Kim, a 28-year-old tax consultant at Price Waterhouse, came to Cleveland with her parents when she was six. "I like the idea of taking care of family and one's elders," she says. "I would never put my parents in a nursing home."

Armed with strong family ties and an indefatigable work ethic, Koreans fanned out across New York. Looking for low rents, they penetrated inner-city markets that other retailers had abandoned or neglected. "A Korean will own a business anyplace in town," says Frank Vardy, a demographer with the City Planning Department. Adds consultant Stephen Solarsh: "The Koreans know how to buy property. I've seen them go to a site and eyeball it and know exactly what they want to do." Solarsh's clients have erected thriving supermarkets in East New York buildings that had become roach-infested drug-shooting galleries. In East Harlem, Korean enterprise revitalized entire blocks with a one-two punch of a produce store followed by a fish store. This cluster then attracted other businesses.

Korean retailers closely tailor their businesses to local demands. Grocery stores in Flatbush and Crown Heights, with their open boxes of salt cod, their banana flour, yucca, and herbal aphrodisiacs, bear little resemblance to those on Manhattan's East Side or in Queens. The Koreans pioneered the 24-hour deli for fast-track Manhattan consumption—no such business form exists in Korea. They introduced the deli salad bar when grocery sales flattened. After the first Korean entered flower wholesaling, Korean delis blossomed with flowers. The ubiquitous nail salon is another Korean creation; by taking nail care out of the full-service beauty salon, Koreans made such pampering available to middle-class women.

Koreans' eye for opportunity led to the resurgence of Manhattan's West 32nd Street. Twenty years ago the long block between Broadway and Fifth Avenue was decaying fast. Tony Pecorella, owner of Santorellos, a 60-year-old leather repair store, says his women customers had stopped coming, fearful of crime. But spotting potential, Koreans started opening businesses to serve the export-import firms clustered nearby. Wholesalers lined up along Broadway between 27th and 32nd Streets, a stretch now known as the Korean Trading Avenue, and retailers on 32nd Street.

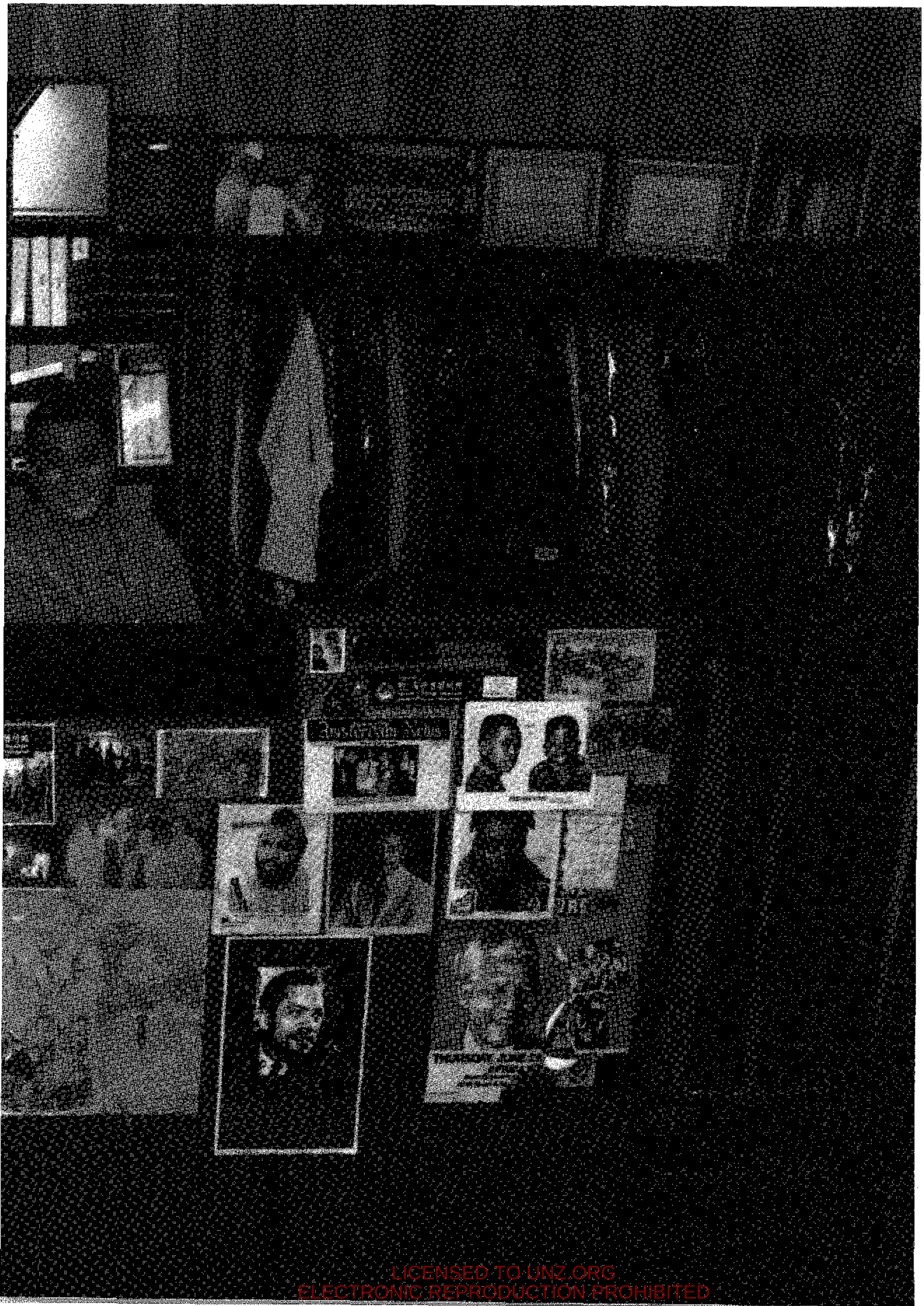
Now the block is ablaze with Korean signs advertising restaurants, bookstores, recording studios, cosmetic stores, and printing establishments. Two lavish Korean banks sit within a short walk of each other. The ornate Stanford Hotel keeps its lobby clock on Seoul time. "The Koreans really cleaned up the street," says Pecorella. The area is safe, its restaurants busy around the clock.

West 32nd Street is the smaller of New York City's two Korean business centers. The other is Union Street in downtown Flushing, Queens, the heart of the Korean-American residential community. Like 32nd Street, Flushing's downtown had hit hard times in the seventies. Today it is densely packed with Korean as well as Chinese businesses. Signs in Korean advertise insurance agencies, driving schools, hair salons, bakeries, bridal salons, and law offices.

Many Korean-Americans who came to New York City in the early wave of Korean immigration—from the late sixties to the early eighties—have achieved that most tangible accoutrement of the American Dream: a house in the suburbs. "All Koreans have the dream of moving out," says John Lee, a Flushing Realtor. "If they're making money in the city, they prefer living in the suburbs, where it is quiet, clean, safe, the schools are good, and [there are] no racial problems." The high earners—attorneys and doctors—go to Long Island; merchants with stores in Manhattan look for lower taxes in New Jersey. The Korean population of Bergen County, New

Won Duck Kim's Guy and Gal clothing store on 125th Street was targeted by a "Buy Black" boycott.

SORRY!
NO CASH
REFUNDS
NO EATING
OR DRINKING
INSIDE
NO
CHECKS
ACCEPTED
NO
SMOKING



Jersey, increased fivefold from 1980 to 1990; Palisades Park now has a Korean business district. The Chois spent two years scouring the metropolitan region for the best schools before settling in affluent Mountain Lake, New Jersey.

Koreans have triumphed as well by the measure of success most important to them—educational achievement. Korean students dominate the city's best schools. Stuyvesant High School is over 50 percent Asian, the Bronx High School of Science 40 percent, and the Juilliard School of Music 33 percent. Koreans are the largest Asian group at all three. Members of the second generation and "1.5 generation"—Korean-Americans born in Korea but raised in the United States—are graduating from Ivy League and other top colleges and returning to the city as attorneys, doctors, computer analysts, and artists.

Behind the younger generation's achievements lies the keen—a few critics argue, overweening—interest that parents take in their children's schooling. Haesu Choi spends two or three hours each night tutoring her two sons, ages ten and eight. "They complain that their friends get to watch TV, but I tell them because we're Asian, they have to do better," she says. During the summer the family spends a month going over math and English. But the Chois don't regard their family simply as an academic factory. "My kids are having fun," says Doug Choi with great pleasure. "In the summer they ride their bikes all over. I like to let them grow like Americans."

Most Korean parents have no time to tutor or even supervise their children due to grueling work schedules. Whereas few wives work in Korea, here most do. But the Koreans brought with them another institution for promoting academic success, the *hagwon* or prep school. (The popular term—"cram school"—is viewed as derogatory by the schools' principals.) Several dozen such schools have sprung up in the city.

Kyung T. Sohn founded the first—C.C.B. Prep School in Woodside, Queens—in 1980. The school is in a small, brick building on Woodside Avenue, plastered with placards in Korean and Chinese, as well as large pictures of Sohn. Inside, every available wall is covered with snapshots of students in class and accepting awards—and more pictures of Sohn advertising his English language program on the Korean cable station. The classrooms, mostly in the basement, are unheated in the winter.

C.C.B.'s main purpose is to ensure that younger students get into the city's competitive high schools and, once there, ace their college admissions exams. In 1994, 95 percent of C.C.B.'s junior high students were admitted to Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, or Brooklyn Tech. Tuition is $595 for eight weeks of Saturday instruction, $695 for eight weeks of Tuesday and Thursday instruction. Half the Saturday students come from the suburbs, dropped off at the school, upon occasion, in Rolls-Royces and BMWs. Most weekday students are Queens residents whose parents are shopkeepers. Parents keep their children in the school for years. Fifty percent of the pupils are Korean; 40 percent are Chinese; and 10 percent Caucasian.

The school teaches math, English vocabulary and grammar, and some literature and writing. Students review the same material over and over. "By the time these kids walk into a placement exam," says one teacher, "they have no anxiety, because they've been doing it for five years." But some of the teachers—most of whom are from city schools—complain of too little emphasis on creative thinking. "This is not real teaching; it's just rote," says one. "It's too cramped and too cold to learn." Though the teachers all express admiration for the Korean parents' involvement, some feel such involvement can backfire. "The graduates of this school are neurotic," one teacher told me. "The culture is not rosy."

The students I met at C.C.B., though, seemed neither unhappy nor anxious. Unlike *hagwons* in Korea, the class atmosphere is informal—students banter incessantly with the teacher and each other. When the bell rings, students dash upstairs, returning to their classes with hot dogs, candy bars, and soup.

A brisk game of chang-gi at a church seniors' program in Flushing.

Soo Young Kang, a striking 14-year-old with a flapper haircut, has been at C.C.B. for eight months. At first Soo resisted an interview mightily, claiming poor English. In fact, she speaks fluently, though she has been in America only three years and speaks only Korean at home. Soo's father is an "international trader," she says, but also helps in her uncle's grocery store near the Kangs' home on Manhattan's East Side.

Soo has absorbed her culture's passion for education: "I wanted to come to America because of college; I heard they had high standards." Which college does she want to attend? An explosion of energy follows. "Harvard," she laughs, a little embarrassed. Her first goal, however, is to get into a competitive high school. "In a regular high school," she explains, "it's harder to get good SATs for Harvard and Yale."

Soo keeps a demanding schedule. After the three-hour session at C.C.B., she studies another two hours when she goes home. On Friday she has a piano lesson; on Saturdays, a flute lesson. Sunday she practices the piano: "It's the only whole day I have for it," she explains regretfully.

Soo says her parents never pressure her to study. But her habits belie this perception, if one assumes that studiousness is not a natural trait in children. High parental expectations are apparently so integral a part of Korean culture that children don't regard them as noteworthy.

Despite her rigorous schedule, Soo says she studied harder in Korea. "The competition and expectations are higher there," she explains. Her American classmates called her a "math nerd" when she arrived in the seventh grade, because her scores were so high. "Some kids say: 'Why do you work so hard?' If I try to explain, they don't listen. So I say to them: 'I do my stuff, you do your stuff.'" The hardest part of American school, she says, is the group projects: "They're fun, but you waste a lot of time in groups. In Korea there's more emphasis on the individual."

Schools such as C.C.B. have quietly taken on a second function: keeping young people off the streets. That highlights a paradox of Korean immigration: though parents came to the United States for their children's sake, heavy work schedules don't leave them enough time to supervise their kids. Community leaders speak with alarm of the appearance of teen delinquency. Though an infinitesimal problem compared with other teens in the city, it terrifies parents and teachers nonetheless.

For parents who can't afford private prep schools, or students who can't pass the entrance exams, churches have stepped into the breach. The 12-year-old Chodae Church in Corona, Queens, has 85 students in day care and after-school programs. Located in a single-story box under the Grand Central Parkway, the church charges $180 a month tuition. The school helps students do their homework and meet citywide standards in reading and math. "We are also reluctantly functioning as baby-sitting," laments the Reverend John Paik, a diminutive, ebullient 72-year-old.

Several of the students I spoke with at Chodae share the enthusiasm for learning that Soo Young Kang exhibited at C.C.B. When Paik asked a class of third-graders for a volunteer to be interviewed, the room erupted. The students pounded their feet, waved their hands in the air, and cried, "Me! Me!" After a whispered consultation with the teacher, Paik chose eight-year-old Christina. Asked if she liked the church school, Christina clasps her hands together in delight. "I enjoy it very much," she says. "I get bored at [public] school. Here we learn math and English and have workbooks for when we finish our homework. Teachers at public schools just say 'Quiet!' or 'Sit down!' They're not very demanding. The teachers at after-school really care about us."

Christina might offer some hope to Korean elders worried about the lack of supervision. Her parents don't get home to Whitestone until nearly 9 PM from their grocery store in Yonkers, and her father leaves the house between 2 and 4 AM. But their message gets across: "They're always saying, 'Christina, you better learn something instead of watching TV.'" Her mother worries about her grades, though the worst she's gotten is a B. What if she got a D or F? A shiver of horror runs through her. "They would spank me," she whispers. Tellingly, she adds: "My parents are not very strict." Like Soo Young Kang, Christina does not perceive her parents' pressure to succeed as a burden but as a sign of concern.

Korean-Americans' worry about what happens to children when parents work such long hours is part of a larger debate about the preservation of Korean culture. The eternal immigrant tension between assimilation and cultural preservation is particularly wrenching for Koreans, whose values seem so alien to contemporary American culture. Although by American standards Korean children are paragons of self-discipline and courtesy, many Koreans find the attitudes of the young alarming.

They're most worried about the erosion of parental authority, difficult to preserve in a nation mesmerized by youthful rebellion. Many parents have gone back to Korea because they could no longer control their children. In Korea corporal punishment is an accepted part of child rearing. But students in America learn in school that if a parent hits them once, they are victims of child abuse and must report it. Numerous Korean parents have been dragged before family court judges, to their utter humiliation.

Joseph Min, 35 and a member of the 1.5 generation, grew up in the crossfire between Korean and American culture. Now the director of the Korean Y, part of the Flushing YMCA, he came to the Bronx with his family when he was nine. At first the habits he learned in Korea stayed with him. There, he went to school at 7:30 AM; after school he went straight to a tutor for additional work; then he did his school homework. He did not watch TV. "I was so disciplined," he says. "And for the first two or three years in the Bronx, I was too." But his parents worked all the time, and they couldn't afford an after-school program. In school he "observed people loosening up and not getting as much homework." Eventually he started watching a lot of TV.

He also learned a completely different attitude toward authority. "The thing that shocked me was the [lack of] respect of the students," he says. "In Korea the teacher is god; students don't talk back. Here, in junior high, when the teacher is writing on the blackboard, the kids just laugh and are allowed to hit each other. It took me ten years to get over my respect and joke about teachers." Says Judy Yoon, who works in her cousin's dry cleaning store in Manhattan: "My kids tell me about their friends at school, who don't respect their teachers and use very bad language. They *hate* it, just hate it. I have to keep telling them that is not the good way."

The Korean church plays a key role in cultural transmission. Many non-Christians converted in America, when they saw how central the church was in the community. Whereas in Korea only about a quarter of the population is Christian, nearly three-quarters of Korean-Americans attend church. The New York area has nearly 500 Korean churches; some have 2,000 congregants.

The Korean Methodist Church and Institute on West 115th Street is the oldest Korean church in New York. Founded in 1921, it occupies a small townhouse on the hill down to Riverside Drive. It holds its Korean-language service in an auditorium across the street. The chapel, where the smaller English-language service is held, is a long, plain white room; quilted banners and a wooden cross hang over its simple altar.

The church is divided by generations. Attending large Korean-language services are mainly first-generation immigrants who joined the church while studying at Columbia other local colleges. Now successful professionals, they drive in on Sundays from the suburbs. Since some are the only Koreans in their suburban communities, the church provides an essential link to other Koreans. The 1.5 and second generation make up the smaller English-language congregation. Most are in their twenties, living in the city. The young congregants, casually but neatly dressed in corduroys, khakis, and bulky sweaters, seem wonderfully self-confident; their English is fluent. All speak of a desire to hold on to their culture.

Hyung Park, 27, started coming to the church, he says, "because after college I needed an outlet to

Korean shops like this West 32nd Street cosmetics store have changed the face of New York retailing.

meet Koreans. Then I became more religious." A graduate of Pratt School of Architecture whose center-parted hair gives him a rakish Edwardian air, Hyung came to New York when he was six. He lives with his parents in Brooklyn and helps in their hardware store. Hyung wants to marry a Korean woman. "I would teach my children Korean. A lot of Koreans tend to lose their heritage, but I don't want to."

Hyung's desire to marry a Korean woman is not accidental. According to Chun Soo Pyun, chairman of Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, daily conversation between parent and child consists of: "(1) study, study, study; (2) eat well, eat well, eat well; (3) best school, best school, best school; and (4) marry Korean, marry Korean, marry Korean." "My parents would have disowned me if I had married a non-Korean," says 28-year-old Jane Kim, whose husband, David, is a violinist. "I dated an American boy seriously for two or three years. My parents liked him, but they were really getting worried."

The Korean language itself is a source of both division and unity within the Korean-American community. Korean parents show a range of responses to the eternal immigrant dilemma of how much to preserve the native language. Ann Song, a 27-year-old freelance graphic designer, speaks no Korean. She grew up in Short Hills, New Jersey, attending bar mitzvahs rather than Korean language school. When she and her parents go to dinner, her parents' friends greet her in Korean and stare disapprovingly when she is unable to respond.

The Chois spoke Korean with their boys until they were five years old. But when the boys' teacher wanted to put them into an English as a Second Language program, Haesu begged her to wait. "After that we spoke only English," she says. Doug Choi adds: "Speaking Korean is important, but the primary thing is, they have to do well in school." By contrast, Judy Yoo, the dry cleaner, kept her children in Korea with their grandmother until they were ten so they could master Korean.

A prayer ends the day at Chodae Church after-school program in Queens.

In some families, parents speak Korean while their children respond in English. For such children, Saturday Korean language school is an important means of maintaining or improving their rudimentary skills. Since Korean is inflected according to the status of the addressee, losing the language means losing a way of marking the culture's gradations of social respect. Some English-speaking children find themselves estranged from Korean-speaking parents.

Outside church, the other certain place to meet Koreans is on the golf course. "Even in the middle of the winter, you'll see a lot of Koreans playing," says Peter Choi, owner of Golf Town on West 32nd Street. Choi, a former managing editor at *Korea Times*, competes with six other big Korean-owned golf stores in the area. In Korea a shortage of courses makes golf very expensive. Here golf cuts across social classes. Early-rising greengrocers are on the course by 5 AM; Korean doctors hold their annual conferences at golf resorts; the few who don't play find themselves shut out of discussions. Women are learning fast, and fathers teach their children.

For all their energy, Koreans aren't exempt from the economic cycle. While early arrivals have prospered, recent immigrants face a more uncertain future. Battered by New York's punishing taxes and regulations, more and more Korean businesses are succumbing to a stagnant economy. Between 1991 and 1994, Korean leaders estimate, at least 1,600 Korean-owned stores in the city went bankrupt. "Koreans don't announce their bankruptcy, because they feel shame and want to disappear," says Bong Jin Sa, executive director of the Korean Produce Association. "But we see the doors closed." Sales at Korean grocers have declined 30 percent in the past three years. Because three out of four Koreans depend on small business, the slowdown touches nearly every family.

The story of Byong Lim, who took over Doug Choi's troubled stationery business on the Upper East Side, is typical. "I feel really trapped," he says. Lim and his American wife would like to close the store on Sundays, but they can't afford to forgo the $250 to $300 the day brings in. He pays $4,500 in rent and $500 in taxes each month; the city's 8.25 percent sales tax drives many would-be customers to illegal street vendors. Lim looks enviously upon the late seventies and early eighties, when Korean-American business was booming.

In good times and bad, all Korean retailers worry about crime. "I've never been to a place like this," Lim says. "You can't let your hand down for an instant." He and his wife have been threatened several times, and children are always trying to steal merchandise. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Koreans stores are disproportionately victimized because of their location in poor neighborhoods.

According to Bong Jin Sa of the Korean Produce Association, Koreans feel ashamed if they are attacked and will report only the most serious incidents. Store owners fear revenge if they call the police. If they report a crime, they rarely get satisfaction, Sa says, so they have stopped bothering. The Produce Association has launched a campaign to persuade shop owners to report all crimes and not to resist or chase criminals, who may be armed.

But however dangerous, shop-owners feel they must fight back against criminals. Doug Choi experiences constant shoplifting. "People ask, 'Why go after someone for 60 cents?' But if I let him go, he comes again. By the time I'm leaving him alone, my store is empty." Choi has paid a price for his vigilance. In late 1994 someone filled up a tray from the salad bar and walked out of the store. Choi followed him outside and asked him what he was doing. The shoplifter knocked him unconscious. Choi's face was swollen for two weeks, and he still has a scar.

Though Koreans don't report most crimes, news of them spreads like wildfire. In a six-month period in 1993, three store owners were killed by robbers. Koreans are still angry over the city's lack of response to the destruction of Chong Sook Kim's variety store in Washington Heights during rioting in 1992. And they remember as well the torching of Tong Kwang Kim's store and the bludgeoning of his wife in Bedford-Stuyvesant in 1991. The press covers such events thinly, if at all.

While crime is worst in the outer boroughs, the city's punishing business tax and regulatory structure hits everywhere. Small businesses in New York pay 14 different taxes. Merchants especially loathe the city's 6 percent commercial rent tax, unique in the nation. A typical grocery requires four to eight licenses—each of which requires a visit to a different agency.

Korean business associations have long sought an easing of the tax and regulatory burden on store owners. Korean leaders charge that the city views its business regulations as a revenue source, noting that a recent Giuliani administration budget earmarked $150 million in additional fines without any mention of increased offenses. Owners particularly object to the laws subjecting them to fines for dirty sidewalks.

Dispirited by all these problems, between 4 and 5 percent of the Korean population is returning each year to Korea, where word of Korean-Americans' long hours and decreasing returns has begun to spread. Those who return are in for a surprise: Koreans who stayed are doing better than those who left, thanks to Korea's booming economy. As a result, immigration has slowed to a trickle: the City Planning Department estimates that only 1,500 Koreans have been entering the city annually in the nineties.

One final problem that is leading would-be or actual immigrants to rethink the U.S. is racial tension. Koreans who do business in the inner city have been the target of racial extortion—thinly veiled threats to "give back to the community" or face boycotts and even violence. "Koreans are the most successful business group in the black community, which is why they target us," says Kee Young Lee, a vice president of the *Korean News*.

Though business concerns have galvanized Korean-Americans over the years, racial hostility has most sparked their political coming-of-age. "Flatbush was the first time we realized we needed political power," says Chun Soo Pyun of the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, referring to the nine-month racial boycott in 1990 that drove two Korean produce stores in Brooklyn out of business. Black activists, led by the Reverend Al Sharpton, charged that employees of the Red Apple market had beaten up a Haitian woman without provocation; the manager denied the charge. The Dinkins administration refused to enforce a court order banning protests within 50 feet of Red Apple and a neighboring store that had been drawn into the dispute. When Pyun organized a City Hall rally to demand that Mayor Dinkins enforce the order, between 7,000 and 10,000 protesters showed up; voter registration was brisk.

But nothing has had as profound an impact on Koreans' ideas about America as the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Six hundred Korean-American businesses in South Central Los Angeles and 200 in Koreatown were damaged or destroyed; Koreans sustained 45 percent of all riot damage. In New York an armed gang vandalized a Korean dry cleaner in the South Bronx in sympathy with the Los Angeles rioters, and vandals shattered the windows of a Korean grocer in Bedford-Stuyvesant as they taunted him with a racist rap song.

Nothing has had as profound an impact on Koreans' ideas about America as the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Though deeply shaken, the Korean business community has turned the other cheek. In February 1993, Al Sharpton gave the invocation at the annual awards dinner of the Korean-American Grocers Association of New York. Last year the Korean Association of Greater New

York sent three students selected by the *Amsterdam News* to Kyung Hee University in Seoul. For four years Korean grocers have distributed "love turkeys" at Thanksgiving through 3,000 churches in minority neighborhoods; they also sponsor spots on black radio stations honoring black heroes.

No other group of small-business owners is subject to such pressure to redistribute its resources, and no other has responded with such a variety of initiatives. Yet these efforts provide no more certain a guarantee against racial animosity than did similar efforts in Los Angeles before the riots. When Mayor Giuliani ousted more than 1,000 illegal street vendors on 125th Street in Harlem in October 1994, a local Nation of Islam mosque organized a short-lived "Buy Black" boycott of non-black merchants on the street. Won Duck Kim, owner of Guy and Gal clothing store, was one of the targets of that boycott. A short man with basset-hound eyes and a quick smile, Kim is hardly insensitive to black concerns: he proudly displays pictures of himself with former Mayor Dinkins, Congressman Charles Rangel, and other black leaders. Awards from black organizations line the top of one 40-foot wall. "Malcolm Lives" and Martin Luther King posters cover his cashier stand. He supports the Harlem Boys Choir. In 1990 he helped organize a nine-day trip to Korea by 37 black preachers. He advertises in the *Amsterdam News*, though his ads there, he says, bring him no business. Asked his opinion of the demand to "give back to the community," he merely says that "new immigrants can't jump over buildings." Tony, one of his two black employees, is more outspoken: "My boss is supporting the community by being here. He has done more than his share—he gives 300 percent. Even in Buy Black stores, the owners don't support the community."

'I love this city,' says Haesu Choi. 'In the whole world, you can't find another like it.'

Many Koreans feel that their political power lags far behind their economic status. Korean culture does not emphasize democratic participation; Koreans have little expectation that government institutions can help them. Many Koreans are afraid to fill out the census or register to vote. If they do register, their grueling hours make it hard to get to the polls. Little wonder the two major centers of Korean-American population, the cities of New York and Los Angeles, have no Koreans in public office.

But that is starting to change. The Flatbush boycott and Los Angeles riots showed that hard work and discipline alone do not guarantee permanent success. After the riots, Diamond Bar, California, sent the first Korean-American, Republican Jay Kim, to Congress. Across the country 11 Korean-Americans, nearly all Republicans, hold government office.

On the local level, commercial worries have spurred some New York Koreans to get involved in politics. The Korean-American Small Business Service Center, joined by 22 other organizations, presented Mayor Dinkins and candidate Giuliani with a Korean Bill of Rights in September 1993. It demanded, among other things, an end to the commercial rent tax, stricter regulation of vendors, and protection from ethnic boycotts and violence. The Korean-American Small Business Center has been one of the most forceful voices for all small business in the city; its president, Sung Soo Kim, organized the Small Business Congress of New York.

Though Korean leaders donated over $1 million to the Giuliani campaign, many have been disappointed that so far Mayor Giuliani has taken no action on his promise to roll back the commercial rent tax, a $600 million revenue source for the city. Also galling to Koreans is city hall's promotion of mega-stores. Says Sung Soo Kim of the Small Business Service Center: "The big supermarkets abandoned the city in the 1970s, leaving a vacuum that immigrant business filled. Now they want to come back, but only with a host of unfair subsidies" such as tax abatements and energy rebates.

Despite these setbacks, some Korean-American leaders are optimistic about their community's political future. "Five years ago our political involvement was invisible," says Chun Soo Pyun. "Now it's totally different." Round-faced and balding, with a quick sense of humor, Pyun points proudly to the fact that he helped raise nearly $100,000 for Giuliani and $30,000 each for George Bush, Dan Quayle, and George Pataki.

Pyun is buoyed by the results of the 1994 elections. When he ran unsuccessfully for the City Council in 1990, Koreans hadn't heard of the GOP, because it is so minor a party in Queens. "People laughed at me. 'You in wrong line,' they said." But in the two most recent elections, he estimates that Koreans voted 70 percent for Giuliani and Pataki.

Pyun is as optimistic about Korean-Americans' business prospects as he is about their political future. Asked to show a visitor the Korean community in Flushing, his first stop is Korea Town Plaza, a giant, controversial wholesale and retail outlet for Asian food and hardware. Owned by Rhee Brothers, a Korean-American corporation based in Maryland, the 100,000-square-foot, $10 million complex deeply divided the Korean community long before it opened in December 1994.

Korean leaders accuse the store of violating both the city's zoning laws and its certificate of occupancy as a wholesaler by operating a huge retail operation. In January 1995, the city Buildings Department issued Rhee Brothers two criminal summonses for zoning violations. Certainly, all the shoppers I questioned were buying for home use, and the gleaming white shelves were lined with individual portions of yogurt, pickled cabbage, and noodles. Korean grocers have formed a federation to lobby the city against the store. As Sung Soo Kim puts it, the Rhee Brothers are "carnivores trying to take away our business."

But Pyun brushes off such squabbles. Bounding through the aisles, he is clearly relishing the Darwinian struggle unfolding in Queens. "Within the entire world, the free enterprise system is springing up," he says. After Korea Town Plaza, he took me to Flushing's two chains of midsize Korean supermarkets. These stores had themselves put many thriving small owners out of business; now, to the grim satisfaction of the smaller owners, they, too, fear competition from the mega-store. But again Pyun is sanguine: "Mega-stores may destroy some businesses temporarily, but then the situation will stabilize." Besides, "Rhee is small business compared with Home Depot."

Pyun's belief in the compatibility of big and small retailers is a minority view within the Korean community. But though he understates the pain and dislocation that giants such as Rhee Brothers will cause, the evolution of Korean entrepreneurship seems, as he says, inevitable. Many Koreans are going into the wholesale business; they also set up computer systems for big stores and service their equipment.

Despite America's racial conflicts and Korea's increased economic strength, Pyun believes the United States will continue to attract Koreans. South Koreans still fear conflict with the North, and Korea's economy is volatile. "America remains the land of opportunity," Pyun says. "It's harder to make money here, but it's steady."

Doug and Haesu Choi are more cautiously optimistic. Asked why they don't move their business out of New York closer to their home, Haesu exclaims: "I love this city. In the whole world, you can't find another like it." But she rues its decline: "It's changed so much since 1975. It's really a shame. People used to pay more attention to each other and their surroundings." Can the Koreans contribute to the city's revival? "The Koreans are still a small percentage compared to other immigrants," Haesu says. "But we hope that as the second generation grows up, they will do something to make it better."

Stephen Solarsh agrees: "Hopefully we will get our quality of life back, and the Koreans are all part of it." ●

The L Word: Love as Taboo

Kay S. Hymowitz

"I can see no trace of the passions which make for deeper joy," wrote Stendhal about Americans in his 1822 essay "Love." "It is as if the sources of sensibility have dried up among these people. They are just, they are rational, and they are not happy at all." Imagine the Frenchman's horror if he could hear today's Americans speak of *l'amour* in what *Mademoiselle* magazine calls this "Post-Idealist, Neo-Pragmatic Era of Relationships." Here is Wanda Urbanska, author of *The Singular Generation,* describing her peers in their twenties: "We . . . do not have affairs, we have 'sexual friendships.' We do not fall in love, we build relationships. We do not date, we 'see' each other." A student quoted in a recent article in the *Vassar Quarterly* adopts the same cool attitude. She doesn't care for the term *boyfriend* or *lover;* she speaks instead of "my special friend with whom I spent lots of quality physical time."

There's no shortage of sex in modern life. But love? Today's culture has made it harder to find, with bad consequences for society.

Many critics of popular culture decry its heat. But oddly enough, the familiar displays of sex and violence often go hand-in-hand with a distinct lowering of the emotional temperature. We are rarely moved by them—and neither are our heroes or stars. They display cool, tough self-sufficiency in each chiseled muscle and sneering put-down. Sure, the bed-hopping may seem sexy at first, but before long its vacant predictability adds up to a big yawn.

Even rock and roll, once a soulful forum for aching, lonely hearts or ecstatic lovers, is now just as likely to rap or croon a message of tough, don't-need-nobody independence. "You gotta be bad," sings Des'ree in a recent top-ten hit; "you gotta be strong; you gotta be hard; you gotta be tough; you gotta be stronger; you gotta be cool." Her counsel finds visual embodiment in fashion ads, such as that for Calvin Klein One unisex perfume—perfume, of all things, the primal sexual lure!—in which a line of grungy young men and women demonstrate, with snarling mouths and pointed fingers, various permutations of seen-it-all exasperation.

COURTESY B. SHACKMAN & CO., INC. (2)

The emotional coolness and self-sufficiency of the Neo-Pragmatic Era of Relationships often finds much more easygoing expression than this. Television comedian Jerry Seinfeld portrays the benign, loopy side of casual sexual friendships in his top-rated series. He, his eccentric buddies, and Elaine, an ex-lover who seems more like his twin sister, drift good-naturedly through a landscape of sexual friendships that inspire about the same level of feeling as the tuna sandwiches Jerry's friend George orders at the local coffee shop. In the 1992 movie *Singles*, the theme song, "Dyslexic Heart," evokes the sad confusion of the young and disconnected. "For some people, living alone is a nasty hang," shrugs Cliff, one of the movie's slacker heroes, to a girl unaccountably and unsuccessfully pursuing him. "Not me. I'm a self-contained unit."

You Do
Something
To Me

Of course, it would be absurd to suggest that romantic love is dead in America. After all, for every "Seinfeld" there's a "Mad About You," a comedy series about a devoted newlywed couple. And for every Des'ree there's a Beverly DeAngelis, a romance guru who writes self-help bestsellers with titles like *Are You the One for Me?*

Still, if love in America is not dead, it is ailing. It is suffering from the phenomenon historian Peter Stearns describes in his book *American Cool*. American cool disdains intense emotions like grief, jealousy, and love, which leave us vulnerable, in favor of an "emotional style" of smooth detachment. If pop culture gods present an elegant vision of American cool, for ordinary mortals the picture is less glamorous. But the unintended consequences of this banal ideal are the same across the economic spectrum: emotional frustration, alienation, and a sexual scene that recalls the drearier imaginings of Nietzsche or Freud.

American cool goes hand-in-hand with a profoundly rationalistic vision of human relations, which looks with suspicion on mystery, myth, and strong feeling. Powerful cultural trends have combined to produce this general coarsening and flattening of the sensibilities: feminism, which feared that love and equality were incompatible; the scientific rationalism of experts from the helping professions, who have helped advance what Lionel Trilling called our "commitment to mechanical attitudes toward life"; and, above all, America's fierce individualism, whose ideal is the free and adventurous loner.

The beginnings of the disenchantment of love and the rise of American cool are well worth examining if only to gauge the trade-offs we have made during this era of liberation. We've purchased our freedom from inhibition and guilt with a loan from imagination and fantasy. And to gain the array of pleasure once denied the bourgeois soul, we've paid the price of deep feeling.

Feminists mounted the first significant challenge to love's hold on the American imagination. Romantic love is a myth, they argued, a myth inextricably tied up with women's inequality. It reinforces the idea of separate spheres for the sexes, providing a "consolation," as writer Juliet Mitchell put it, for women's "confinement in domesticity." Further, feminists contended, the ideal of love strengthened the myth of weak, dependent womanhood in need of strong male protection. Though this view got some airing as early as the mid-nineteenth century, it took on angry, raw urgency in the early 1970s in works like Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* and Marilyn French's *The Women's Room*, which called love a "lie to keep women happy in the kitchen so they won't ask to do what men are always doing." Ti-Grace Atkinson went even further: "The psychopathological condition of love is a euphoric state of fantasy in which the victim transforms her oppressor into the redeemer. . . . Love has to be destroyed." Not just a myth and a dangerous illusion, love was a disease in need of a cure.

If love served to subjugate women, it did no less to men. A man in love was a man subdued.

Some Victorian feminists offered a cure, or at least an antidote, in the form of what they called "rational love." They advocated an "educated" or "organized" union between men and women, a union based on mutual interests and friendly companionship, with knowledge replacing fantasy, and reason superseding untidy passions like jealousy and obsession. In a similar vein, feminists in the 1920s supported the introduction of college marriage courses aimed at dispelling romantic myths with objective, expert knowledge. Companionate marriage—cemented with shared interests, common background, and sexual pleasure rather than strong emotion—became the new rational ideal.

A health and family-life curriculum that the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women is developing exemplifies a contemporary version of this ideal. The curriculum sets up a contrast between bad, illusory "romantic love" and good, clearheaded "nurturing love." The latter entails responsibility, sharing, friendship, pleasure, and "strong feelings." But examples of "What Love Isn't" include jealousy, possessiveness, obsession, dependency, and giving yourself up—that is, just about every extreme of feeling that romantic love may arouse.

The feminist view of the myth of love contained a curious, counterproductive misreading of history. For if love served to subjugate women, it did no less to men. In many countries where romantic love has not been institutionalized, men's philandering is winked at while respectable women are kept veiled and hidden. In its first institutional flowering in the guise of medieval courtly love, stylized passion turned the wandering, brutish young men of the day—who might literally rape an unprotected woman as easily as slay that night's dinner—into sensitive, pining poets. The important point altogether ignored by early progressive reformers and feminists was that it was precisely as a powerful way of sublimating the passions that romantic love was a civilizing force. A man in love was a man subdued.

But a man in rational or nurturing love? As Peter Stearns points out, the changing articles of *Esquire* magazine suggest just how compelling men would find "organized," "educated" sharing. In the thirties, *Esquire* endorsed the new companionate marriage recommended by feminists and sociologists, publishing many stories and advice columns exploring what one writer called

"Brave New Love" and cautioning against the excesses of romantic passion. But by World War II, the magazine, presaging the arrival of *Playboy*, dispensed with all love talk and got down to the nitty-gritty: sex. *Esquire*'s trajectory from love to brave new love to sex suggested that lifting the veil of the illusion of love might reveal not the sweet smile of equal, harmonious sexual relations but the predacious grin of raw impulse.

Doctors and health experts, starting at the turn of the century, espoused theories that echoed the feminist disdain for passion and fantasy. Inspired by advances in the understanding and treatment of venereal disease, the medical profession argued against Victorian sexual repressiveness and in favor of a demystification of sex. "Sex mystery prevents progress," announced a book by a social hygienist, as progressive reformers devoted to the eradication of venereal disease called themselves. By releasing "sex mystery" from the murky control of priests and superstition and bringing it under the bright light of science, humanity would enjoy health and progress.

With Love and Devotion

COURTESY B. SHACKMAN & CO., INC. (2)

For all their innovativeness, the social hygienists were hardly sexual freethinkers; by and large they believed in the Victorian virtues of chastity and self-restraint. But they began a process of the medicalization and rationalization of sex whose basic assumptions continue to control much current thinking on the subject. They believed that sexual desire could yield easily to the discipline of logic and information; hence they became the first to advocate sex education in the schools. They would probably not be surprised to find that today it is still usually taught in health classes. And they introduced what author Barbara Dafoe Whitehead has called the "Scopes trial terms" that continue to make the sex education debate so stubbornly hyperbolic: the scientifically minded, enlightened realists versus the superstitious, religious flat-earthers.

Yet the social hygienists would surely be dismayed by some of what is done in the name of health today. For the idea of rationalized and demystified sex has been stretched to its logical limits, as sex mystery—the dense subject of poets, philosophers, mystics, lyricists, and sacred codes—has given way to sex mechanics.

Nowhere is this robotization of sex more glaring than in the curricula of modern sex educators, the intellectual heirs of the social hygienists. In what may have been a swan song of sexual love in 1959, a sex education manual began: "The end and aim of sex education is developing one's fullest capacity for love." Today nothing could seem more quaint. Most modern sex education programs center on teaching not just health but technical skills—communication skills, decision-making skills, refusal skills, and, of course, condom skills. Some years ago the Massachusetts Department of Public Health produced an AIDS-prevention video in which a hip young nurse distributes flash cards depicting the 14 stages of condom use. The students get together, look at one another's cards, and decide the proper order—which looks like this: "Talk with Partner," "Decision by Both Partners to Have Sex," "Buy the Condom," "Sexual Arousal," "Erection," "Roll Condom On," "Leave Space at Tip (squeeze out air)," "Intercourse," "Orgasm/Ejaculation," "Hold onto Rim," "Withdraw the Penis," "Loss of Erection," "Relaxation," and, finally, an environmental skill, "Throw Condom Out." Note the goosestep courtship suggested to today's robolovers: "Talk with Partner, Decision by Both Partners to Have Sex."

Today's sex educator sees his demystifying task as ensuring not only that kids have the information necessary to avoid disease and pregnancy but also that they have "healthy" attitudes toward sex. A healthy student is one who is "relaxed" and "comfortable" in the presence of the erotic and can speak of sex in the same tones and with the same lack of emotion he might bring to a discussion of carburetors. Giggling kids who appear to suffer from embarrassment or reticence, sure signs of "anti-sex" attitudes or irrational hang-ups, must undergo a program of desensitization. One exercise I recently heard about at a private school in Brooklyn attempted such a reeducation, much to the dismay of a number of parents: in a fifth-grade class students were required to pronounce the words for the genitals at increasingly louder volume. Children calculating math problems in nearby classrooms were serenaded by their ten-year-old friends yelling, "Penis! Vagina!!"

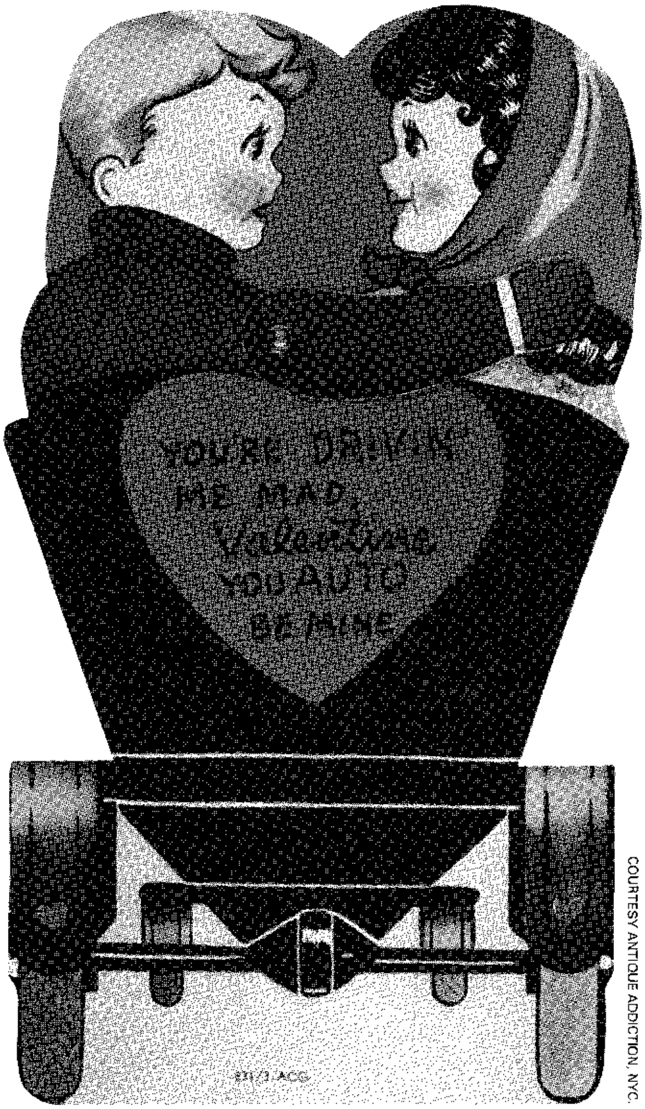
The push to rationalize and deintensify sexual desire is so total that some educators even try to reprogram their students' fantasy lives. William A. Fisher, a professor of psychology at the University of Ontario, and Deborah M. Roffman, a sexuality education teacher at the Park School in Brooklandville, Maryland, suggest one way to

steer fantasies into conformity with the rational ideal. Because teenagers' sexual fantasies usually don't involve condoms, Fisher and Roffman propose, why not show them "fantasy walk-throughs" in stories, videotapes, or plays, where kids like themselves "successfully perform . . . sex-related preventive behaviors." "Such imagery," they continue, "should enter teenagers' memories as fantasy-based scripts for personally practicing preventive behaviors when or if such behaviors are necessary."

Striking the same chilling, Strangelovian tone of scientific detachment, sex educators object to Hollywood's dream vision of sex not because coupling is ubiquitous or mechanical but because it is "irresponsible" or "unrealistic," with so few references to birth control, diseases, or abortion. More "pro-social messages," according to this line of thinking, would solve the problem of the hypersexed media.

The examples I've cited are extreme; few children are treated to classroom exercises precisely like these. Nevertheless, such examples expose the inadequacy of the terms of the recent culture wars over condom distribution, the Rainbow curriculum, or the promotion of masturbation as a form of safe sex. What's happening is not as simple as a contest between enlightened liberals seeking to liberate sexual life from Puritan repressiveness, and life-denying conservatives who wish to imprison it in a web of moral and religious restrictions. On closer inspection, the sexual liberals turn out to be advancing their own rigid moral strictures. Their Eros lays down an updated Puritan law: pleasure and self-fulfillment, yes; passion, no. The question, it begins to seem, isn't whether a society will codify sexual behavior but how it will do so. "From authority," Philip Rieff has written, "there is no escape"; that authority has simply been transferred from the church to the clinic.

This medicalization of sex has deposed the irrational chimera Love and installed reasonable Health as king. Kids must have "healthy" atti-



COURTESY ANTIQUE ADDICTION, NYC.

tudes; they must make "healthy" decisions. A 1993 *Good Housekeeping*/CBS poll asked teenagers to give reasons not to have sex. While 85 percent mentioned fear of AIDS or pregnancy, only 4 percent said "not being in love." And although the increasing popularity of abstinence as a value to be taught in the schools may seem like an important shift in the cultural climate, it only perpetuates the medical-scientific mode of sexual thinking. An article entitled "AIDS Disinformation" in *Seventeen* illustrates the problem: "Seventy-eight percent of women are sexually active by age 19," it announces. "This is not to say that abstinence isn't an important option. It is the only way to be 100 percent sure of not getting HIV through sexual transmission."

Conventional wisdom has it that the hypersexed media encourage kids to "fool around." But this half-truth begs the question of where in today's culture a teenager can find any alternative vision, any language for imagining sex as a potentially powerful union. Many parents today mumble something like, "Be careful." Meanwhile, their own behavior is corrosive to the idealistic longings of adolescence. In her book *Erotic Wars*, sociologist Lillian Rubin quotes a promiscuous 17-year-old who was 12 when her father left her mother for a younger woman. "I don't want to hear about any of that love stuff," the girl says. "It's garbage, just plain garbage. If a guy wants to make it with a girl, he'll say anything. I just spare them the trouble, that's all. Anyway, what's the big deal?"

Educators second this kind of cynicism when they advise kids only to "talk with partner" or "make healthy, good decisions." On what moral terms should a teen ground this good decision? Here the educators come up empty-handed. A National Guidelines Task Force of sex educators looked into this problem and could offer only platitudes like, "Every person has dignity and self-worth," and the priceless, "All sexual decisions have effects and consequences." Is it any wonder that kids today, stripped of all spiritualizing ideals and with nothing but dismal "health" to replace them, would shrug and ask, "What's the big deal?"

Love's most powerful enemy may well be America's obsession with individual autonomy. The free, self-contained individual—or "unit," as Cliff puts it in *Singles*—looks with suspicion on emotions that threaten dependence on others, and he celebrates those that glorify his splendid isolation. From this point of view, love might well signal childish weakness. "Clearly, romance can arrive with all its obsession whenever we're feeling incomplete," writes Gloria Steinem in her best-selling 1992 book, *Revolution from Within*. "The truth is that finding ourselves brings more excitement and well-being than anything romance has to offer." Steinem's prissy rejection of powerful feeling echoes that of some of her precursors, the nineteenth-century feminists. But it goes a step further. From her perspective, the problem is not merely that love's urgent desire for the other can shade into out-of-control obsession. It is that this obsession sweeps us away from life's central project: finding ourselves.

Finding ourselves is a complex task these days. It means not only developing interests and talents but also "exploring" what we have come to call "our sexuality." While sex is an activity or behavior involving another individual, sexuality is a territory of the self. Its logic insists that we are all "self-contained units." Others must not interfere.

Watch Oprah or Donahue, pick up any academic treatise on "gender," flip through any sex education curriculum, or read any self-help book, and the creed of healthy sexuality will stare you in the face. "Sexuality is much more than 'sex' or 'sexual intercourse,'" explains one sex manual for girls. "It is the entire self as girl or boy or man or woman. . . . Sexuality is a basic part of who we are as a person and affects how we feel about ourselves and all our relationships with others." Though it may affect how we feel about others, it does not necessarily tie us to them, for sexuality is first and foremost a vital arena of self-expression and creativity, a central act in the drama of personal identity. Leah P., married 18 years and interviewed on a National Public Radio show about sex and marriage, admits she would hesitate to have an affair but insists on her autonomy from any rules or institutions or even relationships: "My sexuality belongs to me. I can take it where I choose to. . . . It doesn't belong to my husband; it doesn't belong to my marriage."

The creed of sexuality demands that the individual "explore" or "develop" her sexuality fully by experimenting with different partners, in different positions, at different times of the day, or in different rooms of the house or office. During the seventies, when the novels of Anaïs Nin and Erica Jong were popular, promiscuity became

almost a matter of principle for many women newly liberated from old-fashioned notions of what good girls could and couldn't do. Sexual variety and abundance did not merely promise pleasure; they asserted women's freedom and independence. ("That was the meaning of freedom," thinks Nin's heroine Sabine about a one-night stand in *A Spy in the House of Love.*) And further: to expand one's sexuality was to expand one's very identity.

But if sex is imagined as a meeting of free, autonomous, and creative selves, each engaged in an act of self-exploration, we are left with a problem: the lover—or partner, the current term and one better evoking the situation—is in danger of becoming an object to be used and played with. The connection between partners can then only be imagined as contractual: two free agents voluntarily and conditionally involved in a mutually agreed-upon activity. Some of our best and most disenchanted bureaucratic minds have gotten to work on this, as exemplified by the 14 Stages of Condom Use and the now famous Antioch College sexual harassment code. "Obtaining consent is an ongoing process in any sexual interaction," the code reads. "Verbal consent should be obtained with each new level of physical or sexual conduct in any given interaction. . . . The request for consent must be specific to each act."

Although it ostensibly prizes freedom and pleasure, the creed of "sexuality" instead produces this sort of leaden, bureaucratic vision of sex. Here, unlike the lover willing to risk opening his heart in hopes of joyful union, the partner becomes a skilled negotiator demanding and accepting conditions for his or her personal pleasure. Hence, "sexuality" inevitably restrains the emotional, truly personal connection between lovers, stifling what Stendhal called the "passions which make for deeper joy." Central to an age of personal health and fulfillment, "sexuality" flattens as well as enriches the self-contained, autonomous individual. It giveth and it taketh away.

How entirely fitting, then, that the latest terrain of the culture wars, highlighted by the firing of Joycelyn Elders, is masturbation. The multiple ironies of teaching the joys of masturbation to teenagers were largely lost in the usual Scopes trial terms of the brouhaha—either you are anti-sex and believe masturbation makes your palms hairy, or you believe, as one Los Angeles school teacher claimed, it is a "way to sexually express yourself without actually having sex." Not least among those ironies is that masturbation does less to enrich sexual life than to advance the project of rational self-sufficiency. No messy emotions here.

OH, JEFF... I LOVE YOU, TOO... BUT...

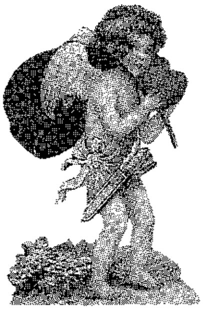
ROY LICHTENSTEIN, OH, JEFF...I LOVE YOU, TOO...BUT..., 1964 ©THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Equally ludicrous, but unfortunately dead serious, is the way in which the primacy of the autonomous, self-contained ego freed from the call of passionate love reveals itself in popular culture. "You can find love if you search within yourself," croons Mariah Carey in her 1994 hit song, "Hero." Accompanied by rich orchestral melodies, the video shows her with the quivering lips and outstretched hands usually associated with deep longing for another. "All I really want is to be happy, but the answer lies in me," sings Mary J. Blige in a more recent hit. Camille Paglia may have said more than she realized when she joked about her own gigantic ego: "There's Tristan and Iseult, Romeo and Juliet, me and me. It's the love affair of the century!"

At times, the sadness of American detachment seeps through the glossiest of advice columns. One example appears in last September's *YM*, a teen magazine, in an article entitled "The Six Love Wreckers (and How to Avoid Them)." Five of the six "love wreckers," those things girls do that chase boys away, involve loving too much. They include: "You're too demanding. . . . You're too jealous. . . . You push for a commitment." "Some guys get really uncomfortable when you try to box them in," warns one expert. "Plus, you risk coming off as desperate and needy." "Get a life! . . . Doing your own thing will make him appreciate you more," barks another author, under the headline "You're too dependent." Adult women get similar advice: pronounces a recent *Cosmopolitan* headline, "Clingy Is Out!"

Jealousy, possessiveness, and dependence are the stuff of our contemporary morality stories. The man in love is neither a hero nor henpecked as he once was; he is now a stalker or wife-abuser, our contemporary villain. Both the mainstream media and teen magazines frequently carry updated gothic tales like "My Ex Tried to Kill Me" or "When a Lover Turns Evil; He Follows You—Spies on You—Loves You to Death." The O. J. Simpson trial fascinates us, in large part because it reminds us of the extremes of these tabooed passions.

In this way, popular culture subverts as well as endorses our tidy scientific-therapeutic view of the human condition. Its current fascination with sadomasochism is a perfect example. A recent article in *New York* magazine cited many exam-



ples, including the fashion photos in *Details* magazine, Gianni Versace's 1992 fashion show with supermodel Cindy Crawford in bondage getup, and plotlines on soap operas, including "One Life to Live" and—one for the teen set—"Beverly Hills 90210." Though presented as the next stage in a continuing liberation from outdated taboos, the fascination with S&M barely conceals the misery of the robo-lover. Enthusiasts are quick to affirm that S&M sex is "consensual," but with its chains and whips, handcuffs and muzzles, it offers the "partner" one last, desperate chance at surrendering his hardened, encapsulated ego to strong feeling. These sex toys suggest a perverse, high-tech twist on sexual liberation: the man or woman who wants to be dominated and controlled, to give himself up completely to another.

But this interest in S&M reminds us as well that, especially in a rationalized world where a lover's joy pales into pleasure and his tormented longing into co-dependence, irrational fantasy and intense desire will always bubble up. Kids raised in a world without an enriching myth to humanize the Dionysian demons growling and scratching below the surface of civility and to intensify their attachments to another are not a happy sight. For if some teens have reaped the superficial benefits of the new dispensation's relaxation of traditional taboos, all too many suffer from its shallowness.

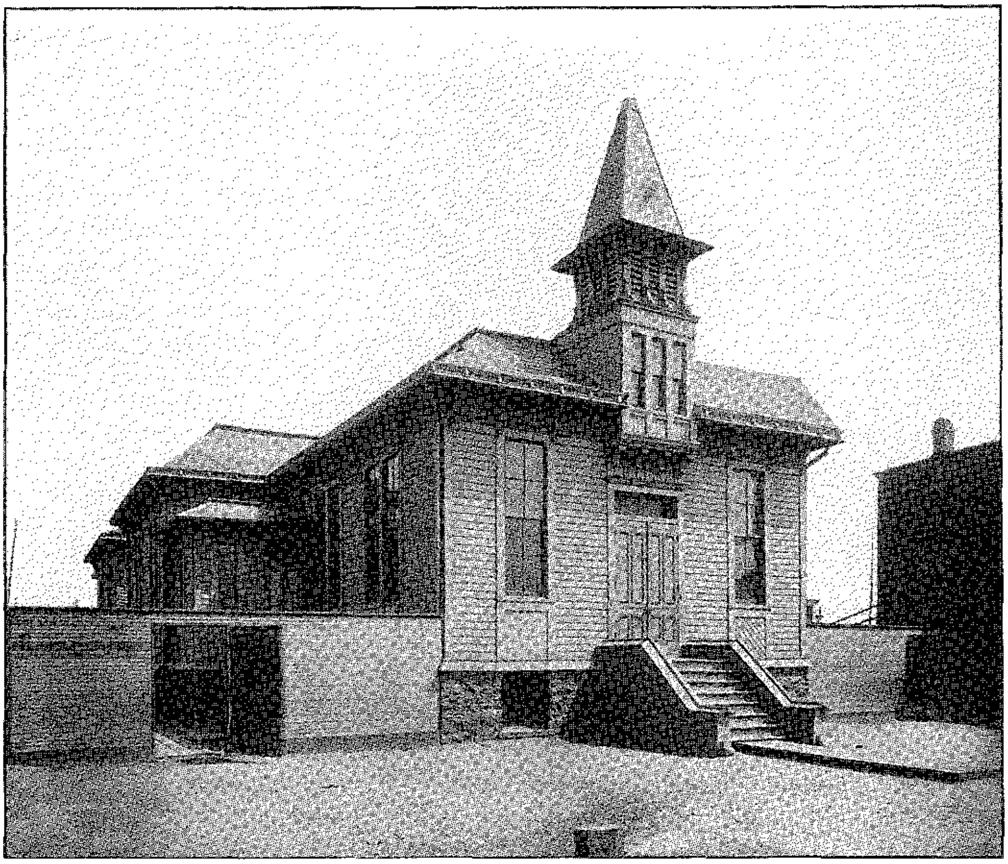
For girls, the results are not just the widely reported epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies. Also evident to many working with these young women is a sense of vacant joylessness. Fifteen-year-olds with ten or even more "partners"—sociologist Lillian Rubin interviewed one 16-year-old who said she had "40 or 50"—do not merely fail to find love; ironically, they also fail at the pursuit of pleasure, for they are almost never orgasmic. They promise to become a new generation of embittered women, resentful of men, cynical about love, and ripe for single motherhood.

How could they be otherwise, given the boys they have to contend with? Without any humanizing myth to help quiet the demons, boys have begun to play out the truth of Freud's observation that lust and aggression are deeply intertwined. Reports of young studs "playing rape" in a Yonkers school yard during recess, of nine-year-old sexual harassers and fifth-grade rapists and sodomists, have become too common to pass off as simply anomalous. To be sure, boys have always striven to test their manhood through sexual conquest. But the Spur Posse, a gang of teenage boys from Lakewood, California, are just as surely creatures of a crippled emotional culture. The boys held a contest in which they "hooked up"—a tellingly mechanical phrase—with girls as young as ten. (The winner "scored" 66 girls.)

Dispiriting as they are, these examples don't totally capture the emotional alienation of this Post-Idealist, Neo-Pragmatic Era of Relationships. In his 1979 book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch described the recent crop of patients seeking therapy, who, unlike the general run of patients in the past, "tend to cultivate a protective shallowness in emotional relations" and who are "chronically bored, restlessly in search of . . . emotional titillation without involvement and dependence." Therapists today continue to find such emptiness and emotional blankness the most common complaint. In the past, love has had the virtue not only of satisfying our longing for profound connection but of lifting us out of mundane life into enchantment. While it may not have straightened the crooked timber of humanity, it respected and nourished its tortuous imagination. Today more than ever, the sources of that nourishment seem indeed to have dried up. ●

In the past, love has had the virtue not only of satisfying our longing for profound connection but of lifting us out of mundane life into enchantment.

Let's Seize This Chance for School Reform



ILLUSTRATIONS: CULVER PICTURES, INC.

Brooklyn schools in 1891: Primary School 66 on Osborn Street, . . .

Sol Stern

The teachers' contract, a key bar to education reform, is up for renegotiation in New York, and union leaders say they're ready for innovation. Here's how to hold them to their word.

Sometime this spring Mayor Giuliani's representatives will sit down with negotiators from the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to hammer out the next labor contract for the city's 60,000 teachers. The mayor has said that he wants "a revolution" in the city's highly centralized education system—a transformation whose key principle, according to mayoral education advisor Edward Costikyan, must be to move basic decision making from the wasteful, bureaucratic Board of Education down to the individual school that is responsible for teaching the students. The upcoming contract talks offer the mayor a unique opportunity to bring about exactly the revolution he seeks.

The union contract, with its byzantine and inflexible work rules, is one of the chief obstacles to creating a decentralized, results-oriented school system. In the upcoming negotiations, though, there is reason to think that the UFT could become an agent, rather than an opponent, of change. The union's president, Sandra Feldman, has heard the message that the public is fed up with a failing school system. "You have a great deal of dissatisfaction with public schools, and a lot of it justifiable," she says. "Therefore you have to make the public schools better." The alternative bodes ill for her members. Says she: "If we don't improve the schools, we are going to get vouchers—we are going to get a major dismantling of the public schools."

Teachers are the soul of the educational enterprise. But New York's current teachers' contract seems to assume there's no human intelligence within each of the city's more than 1,000 schools capable of ordering productive working relationships among teachers, administrators, and parents. Instead, it imposes a single set of rigid work rules on every teacher and school.

Suppose the principal, parents, and teachers at a particular school want to experiment with a longer school day. No way, says the contract: "The school day for teachers serving in schools shall be 6 hours and 20 minutes." What if the principal and the teachers decide it would be a good idea to get together once a week during a lunch period, send out for sandwiches, and discuss school issues? The contract has an answer: "Every elementary school teacher is to have a duty-free lunch period of 50 minutes." The contract also micromanages such things as the number of lunchroom assignments teachers can be given, how many periods per week they teach (25), and how principals must assign teachers to classrooms and programs.

In the sections on in-school assignments, the contract language becomes truly baroque. Consider Article 7C2e:

"In order to make certain that teachers are not frozen into positions which are relatively easy or difficult, the following procedures should be adopted in making class assignments . . . on a particular grade level:

"(1) On each grade level, classes should be divided into two categories, difficult and less difficult, in terms of reading achievement. In general, a teacher who has been assigned to a class in one category for a period of one year should be assigned to the other category for the next year."

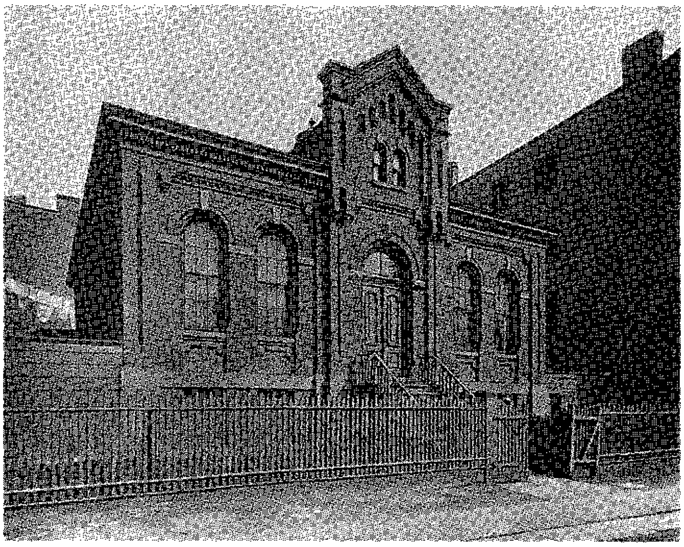
In other words, the UFT has mandated the controversial policy of tracking children based on their reading level—not because the union believes the policy is in the best interests of children but because it's convenient for teachers.

Lest anyone think the contract provisions are just boilerplate and don't affect children, consider what happened last year at P.S. 145. For five years the fourth-grade gifted and talented class at this Manhattan elementary school had a beloved teacher named Mrs. Uhlman. But then another teacher in the school decided he wanted the job and invoked his seniority rights under the UFT contract. Parents and students protested; the principal said no; the district superintendent sided with the principal. No matter: the union backed the senior teacher and won a grievance that went all the way to the chancellor's office. Mrs. Uhlman was removed from the class in the middle of the year, despite the threat of a parent boycott and an article in the *New York Times* describing her students in tears at the prospect of losing her.

As this story demonstrates, the current contract values seniority above all educational goals. The reverence for seniority lies at the heart of the contract's single most damaging provision, the "seniority transfer plan," under which 300 to 400 teachers move from one school to another every year. This plan requires principals to fill up to half their job openings with applicants from other schools, with hiring based exclusively on seniority. The receiving school's principal doesn't even have the right to interview the incoming UFT transfers. This rule defines jobs held by young teachers who haven't received their final qualification as "openings," so that more senior outsiders can unceremoniously displace energetic and often dedicated beginners.

Such rules can frustrate the best school reform efforts by undermining the leadership crucial to creating a good school. I spoke with the director who was trying to turn around a small alternative school in Manhattan and develop a challenging curriculum for its almost entirely minority student population. With a total of only 12 teachers, the school has been sent five UFT transfers in six years.

"You have no say when the UFT transfers come in, and then they are here for life," the director says. "You are stuck with them until they decide to leave or retire. So you try to take action against the incompetent ones or those who do no work. You spend six months going to their classrooms and writing them up and then going to grievances with the UFT district representative. And then nothing happens anyway—so what's the point? You just give up."


Intermediate School 69 on Union Avenue, and . . .

What's more, the transfer process creates perverse incentives for principals to turn the teacher evaluation system into a farce. Teachers are allowed to transfer out of schools only if they have not had an unsatisfactory rating from the principal. Thus, principals who want to encourage nonperforming teachers to transfer will give them satisfactory evaluations.

This process resembles a longshoremen's hiring hall of the 1950s, with the worker who has the most years of seniority getting the plum job. The UFT transfers who come into schools often are not only unwanted but frequently become disruptive to the school program. With some exceptions they tend to be burned-out cases, having taught, on average, for 20 years.

As the father of two public school students, I have personally witnessed the disruption created by UFT transfers. One of the UFT transfers we took at P.S. 87, the school my children attended, looked like—and often behaved like—a derelict. Mostly he was assigned to monitor the school yard and lunchroom; hunched over and carrying a plastic shopping bag, he would wander around the yard in an apparent stupor. Parents who didn't know who he was thought that a vagrant from the nearby streets had somehow managed to get into the yard. On the few occasions when he was allowed to stand up in front of a class, his odor made children physically ill.

Delegations of parents would go to the UFT's district representative asking for help. They were told that our principal would have to "go through the process"—the same process that gave our derelict a satisfactory rating at his previous school. The "process" includes a teacher disciplinary system that is rigged in favor of incompetent teachers. In some years not one tenured teacher out of a workforce of more than 60,000 is dismissed for incompetence.

After four years the principal and some parents came up with a creative approach. They made sure that when Carl McCall, then president of the New York City Board of Education, visited our award-winning school, our UFT transfer would be teaching a class on McCall's itinerary. McCall was stunned. Soon we heard that some phone calls had been made and our UFT transfer was persuaded to take a medical leave.

The UFT is the largest—some would say also the most powerful—labor union local in the country. It has more than 100,000 dues-paying members (including 60,000 active teachers) and a budget of over $30 million. It is so powerful that the union's eight-story building at 260 Park Avenue South is as key a center of power in the governance of New York City's school system as the Board of Education's headquarters across the river at 110 Livingston Street in Brooklyn.

The central board and the union have squared off in some nasty battles during the past three decades. But at the same time, they have evolved a mutually convenient arrangement that protects their respective interests in an $8 billion education empire. One example of many: the redundant licensing requirements for teachers. They justify more bureaucracy at the central board, and they give senior teachers a further advantage over aspiring ones. Moreover, the licensing procedures create more jobs for union members, who administer the tests and teach courses required to earn a license.

In contrast to the New York contract, the Boston contract is infused with vision and openness to innovation.

Yet across the country as well as in New York, the movement within the public education system for giving parents real choice about their children's education is steadily expanding. State legislation, innovative teacher union contracts, and privately funded school redesign projects have produced several reform models. Many states have enacted legislation authorizing charter schools that follow their own rules rather than those imposed by a district. In Chicago, councils of parents and teachers have the power to hire and fire principals and run neighborhood schools. The nonprofit New American Schools Design Corporation works with districts throughout the country to design autonomous schools. The Annenberg Foundation, a powerful force for school reform, will provide $500 million to create independent public schools in four cities—New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The New York program will produce a network of 100 alternative schools.

Teachers' unions now understand that they must accommodate, even champion, these reforms within the public school system in order to ward off the threat of vouchers, which, by ending the public school monopoly, could spell doom for teachers' unions. Joan Buckley, the American Federation of Teachers official who coordinates the national union's campaign against vouchers, recently told the union's newspaper: "Hopefully, this [campaign] will buy the breathing room needed to allow the emergence of what ultimately will be the real solution to privatization, vouchers, tuition tax credits, and other dangers—genuine school reform."

The contract signed last year in Boston illustrates just how far some teacher unions are willing to go. It is no mere public relations boast when Robert Pearlman, research director of the Boston Teachers Union, says the agreement "may well be the nation's most innovative teachers' contract in establishing an infrastructure for school-based reform." Indeed, the contract is an inspiring model of how a collective bargaining agreement—without any changes in state law or regulations—can serve as the vehicle for radically transforming public school systems.

Right at the beginning there was something different about the Boston contract negotiations. The parties hired Conflict Management Inc., an outfit that has pioneered collaborative techniques of collective bargaining, to get the talks going. Before even discussing the details of the contract, the principal negotiators—the union, the school district, and the mayor's office—hammered out a common educational philosophy, determining what structural changes were necessary in the organization of schools to improve the city's education system.

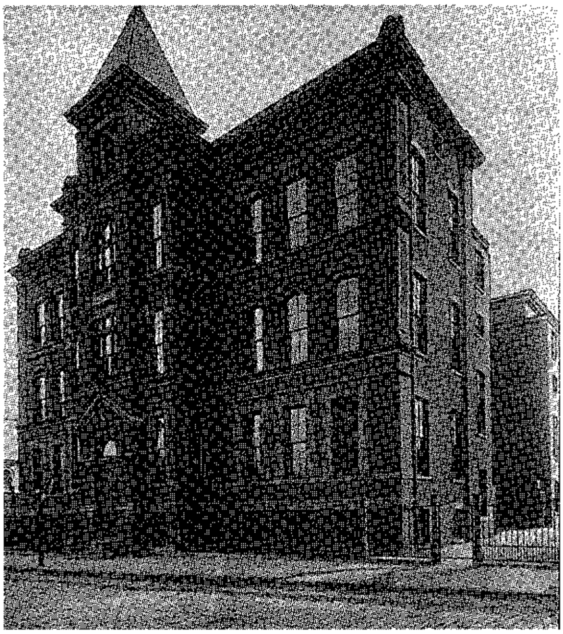
The contract they wrote is a bracing read. In contrast with the New York contract—a crabbed, constricting document full of prohibitions and rigid procedures—the Boston contract is infused on almost every page with vision and openness to innovation.

It begins with a moving statement of commitment to change that honestly recognizes that the city's public schools have not done well enough for the children. Then, under the heading "The Importance of School-Based Decision-Making," the preamble states what is perhaps the key principle for any meaningful school reform: "Within the bounds of law and economic efficiency, decisions affecting the educational process and the delivery of services can and should be made at the local [school] level, with corresponding accountability for the result achieved."

The Boston contract creates school site councils, with 50 percent parent representation and 50 percent staff representation, at every school. These councils have the power to "manage all matters that relate to the operation of the school, including . . . design and scheduling of the instructional program and curriculum . . . hiring of new staff and in-transfer of staff from other schools in the system and staff assignment, including teaching and non-teaching duties."

Almost every part of the contract reflects the conviction that the interests of children come before the interests of the adults who collect their paychecks in the school.

For example, a section titled "Scheduling and Teaching Load" states: "The teaching schedule and assignments of teachers shall be determined at the school level to meet the best interests of children." Schools have great flexibility in determining the length of classes, class sizes, staffing levels, and schedules of teachers and students.



Grammar School 76 on Wyona Street.

And the best may be yet to come in Boston. By September the contract will establish six revolutionary "pilot schools." Run by community organizations, universities, or groups of parents and teachers, these will be organized like private schools, with two exceptions: they will be publicly funded, with a per-pupil budget allocation from the school district; and they will have to hire union teachers, paying them at least union wages. They will be free to augment some teachers' salaries with merit pay and to experiment with lengthening the school day and the school year, which remains fixed by contract in other schools. And they can reconfigure in-school assignments of teachers in any way they choose.

These new schools are called pilots because the idea is to create more of them in time, says Ed Doherty, president of the Boston union. "When we go back to the bargaining table, we will try to improve on the initiatives. And certainly there is room to expand the number of these schools."

I asked Doherty whether this wasn't a revolutionary step for a union leader to take—allowing so many schools (6 percent of all Boston schools, the equivalent of 60 schools in New York) to remain outside the orbit of the union contract. "I don't think we are less interested in protection," he says. "But we are well aware of the allegation that union contracts are an obstacle to reform. We were trying to deal with that perception that we are the obstacle. And we realized that, when you have employees making the rules in their own schools, you don't need the other kind of protections anymore. If we are really moving toward school-based management, then the need for hard and inflexible rules is gone."

The Boston precedent casts a large shadow over the upcoming New York contract negotiations. Certainly Sandra Feldman is aware of its significance and of the other school reform initiatives around the country. In an interview the UFT president was defensive about the criticisms of the union for being an enemy of reform but was just as anxious to prove that the union was ready for a breakthrough. She and other leaders are "moving the union to a different place," she says. And she cites the union's support for the Annenberg Foundation's network of small, autonomous schools.

"I think there should be choice within the public school system," she says. "We know smaller schools work better, where adults know all the children's names. And I think parents and teachers should have much more choice about what schools the kids get sent to and what schools they work in. . . . Can you imagine if you had teachers who decided on a particular school not because there is a certain population there but because there is a certain program that they want to try, an educational theory that they want to be involved in?"

Moving this very big and bureaucratic union to that "different place" is a hard sell. Back in the early sixties, when the UFT won the right of collective bargaining and negotiated its first contract, the union had to wrest protection for its members from a system that often treated teachers arbitrarily, somewhat like interchangeable factory workers. "We have a contract that was written out of a blue-collar ethos," Feldman says. Until 1988, teachers had to punch a time clock when they arrived at or left school.

Nevertheless, Feldman maintains that the union had already taken significant steps toward meeting the demands for flexibility at the school level—for example, the School-Based Options clause in the contract, allowing union chapters at individual schools to ask for waivers from some aspects of the contract. Recently this clause has been extended to seniority transfers for some schools. But this is a very limited reform: a waiver requires ratification by three-fourths of a school's union teachers and still higher levels of approval from the union hierarchy and the Board of Education. Feldman concedes that the procedures are too encumbered, too bureaucratic; she says the union was willing to go further.

Yet one might remain skeptical about the union's readiness to let go. When the delegate assembly of the union endorsed the new plan to allow some schools to get waivers from seniority transfers, UFT vice president David Sherman told the delegates: "When it is done right . . . it provides a really good match of teachers and school"—but doing it right, he explained, means doing it "with the union in charge."

Feldman insists, however, that the union is now ready to give schools the freedom they need to shape their individual educational programs. I asked her whether this might include transforming the entire hiring system—including transfers into schools—into a free labor market for all teachers. I even suggested a hypothetical arrangement in which the school system would post all vacant jobs, any teacher could apply for them, and principals or school site committees would select from among the applicants.

To my surprise, Feldman says she would not oppose this in principle. She also says that she is aware of the advantages of collaborative bargaining and that the union would be willing to bring in an outside facilitator like Conflict Management Inc. for the upcoming contract talks. "The School-Based Option is just the beginning," she notes. "I want to see a constituency of my members who are in favor [of school-based reforms]. The more you get teachers involved in small schools, in modified transfer plans, the more the constituency grows in the union for those kinds of arrangements."

So which is it? Is the UFT primed for an historic leap toward a new covenant for public education that recognizes each individual school as a unique community? Or is the union fighting a rearguard action, paying lip service to reform while using the existing contract's labyrinthine grievance machinery to frustrate efforts to liberate schools from rigid work rules?

The UFT should turn its contract into a charter for a different kind of system—one that vests power in teachers, principals, and parents.

The answer, probably, is a little of both. Leaders with a national perspective, like Sandra Feldman, are no doubt serious about wanting to see the union play a vanguard role in school-based reforms. But just as surely, mid-level union officials and many older union members are frightened by the prospect of individual schools making personnel decisions without regard to seniority or work rules.

Many union officials understand that if such reforms occur, teachers could shift their loyalties from the citywide union toward a particular school. They would be giving up collective rights for individual autonomy and professional accountability. It's a trade-off that would be profoundly beneficial for teachers who strive for excellence and just as profoundly threatening for mediocre time-servers. No wonder the union seems at odds with itself.

Yet surely the union could be nudged in the right direction during the upcoming contract negotiations. City hall should take Feldman at her word and propose a collaborative negotiation aimed at clearing away obstacles to creating autonomous schools. After Boston it's no mystery how to achieve such a transformation.

Like the Boston Teachers Union, the UFT should turn its contract into a charter for a different kind of system—one that vests power in teachers, principals, and parents. Most important, the new contract should include three basic reforms.

It should eliminate seniority transfers.

It should establish, at every school, a council composed of an equal number of parents and teachers. With the principal's leadership, the council should have great flexibility in managing the school's budget and developing an educational philosophy suited to its particular student body. With a supermajority vote of its faculty, the school should be able to get waivers from most remaining board regulations and union work rules. However, the Board of Education or a similar agency must hold the council and the principal accountable for the school's performance.

The contract should authorize the creation of a few Boston-style pilot schools that contract with the central board for their budgets but operate outside the day-to-day regulation of the board or the union contract. As in Boston, these schools should be free to experiment with the length of the school day and school year, teachers' salaries, and licensing requirements.

Not long ago such changes would have seemed politically impossible. Now, given the union leadership's public support for reform, the public's support for a decentralized school system, the example of the Boston contract, and the Giuliani administration's successful track record in labor negotiations, these reforms are entirely realistic. And they could provide the impetus to restructure the Board of Education itself.

The upcoming contract talks could achieve a major breakthrough toward reinventing New York's failing $8 billion educational system. Every parent in the city would cheer. ◆

New York's Nightmare Legislature

Kenneth Silber

Democrats and Republicans in Albany have a deal: don't mess with my spending and I'll leave yours alone. Who will make them mend their ways?

Like mistletoe that runs riot while its host tree languishes, the New York State Legislature has drained vitality out of the Empire State's economy for years. Today the Legislature is the chief obstacle confronting the Pataki administration's push to reduce the size of state government and promote economic growth: whatever progress the governor makes will be hard to sustain without thorough reform of the rules and practices of both the Senate and the Assembly.

Under current arrangements, the Legislature operates as a relentless business-crushing, job-killing, tax-and-spend machine, geared toward the expansion of government and the promotion of special interests at public expense. An opaque legislative process shields lawmakers from public accountability while allowing organized pressure groups to wield vast behind-the-scenes influence. A sprawling, costly legislative bureaucracy serves the interests of politicians and the politically connected. The Legislature is a deeply reactionary institution, resistant to new ideas and slow to adjust public policy to changing conditions.

For more than two decades, a Republican majority has controlled the State Senate, and a Democratic majority has controlled the State Assembly. The result has been government by quid pro quo—the two majorities posturing over their differences while tacitly collaborating to accommodate the permanent interests of each, usually by spending more public money. New York State is governed, in effect, by a single Incumbency Party, dedicated above all to preserving its own power and privileges.

The policy stasis, in other words, is part and parcel of a profound entrenchment of power. The Legislature has striven to keep its membership as unchanging as its policies. Gerrymandering, arcane election laws, and unreformed campaign-finance practices protect incumbents and preserve the existing majorities; generous mailing privileges and other taxpayer-financed incumbent advantages skew election outcomes even further. Many state legislative races are not even remotely competitive. Among the 87 election winners in New York City in 1994, only 11 received less than two-thirds of the vote; in 43 races the winner got 80 percent or better, while another 10 candidates faced no opponent at all.

Photographs by Judith Turner

No wonder that Albany's two majorities have taken on a quasi-permanent status, maintaining their numbers despite sharp swings in the fortunes of the political parties nationwide. In 1994, even as Republicans swept to power in Congress and won 11 new governorships, including New York's, the partisan balance in the state's lawmaking branch changed only marginally: the Republicans increased their strength in the 61-member Senate by one seat, reaching a 36 to 25 majority, while the Democrats lost six seats in the 150-member Assembly, retaining a 94 to 56 edge. By contrast, Democrats in other states lost control of 19 state legislative chambers.

Similarly, the national Democratic tide in 1992 caused barely a ripple in Albany; the Assembly Democrats gained several seats, and the Republican numbers in the Senate were unchanged. Throughout the 1980s, New York's Legislature had the lowest turnover rate of any state lawmaking body in the country, according to a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures. From 1986 to 1990, the reelection rate in each of the Legislature's chambers never fell below 98 percent.

Hitherto, efforts to reform the state's election laws—so uniquely convoluted that about half of the nation's election-law litigation occurs in New York State—have had little result. Candidates must collect thousands of signatures and follow complex petition rules in order to get on the ballot—a boon for incumbents, who have political organizations in place that are adept at collecting signatures. In 1992 Governor Mario Cuomo, eager to claim credit as a good-government reformer, pressed the Legislature to revise the election laws. Lawmakers agreed to only marginal changes, eliminating some of the most trivial reasons for disqualification of candidates—the cover of a petition having a comma out of place, for example. And even these reforms favor officeholders, notes Andrew Greenblatt, executive director of New York State Common Cause. The original requirements were so arcane that even incumbents occasionally ran afoul of them; under the revised laws, virtually all those who are kept off the ballot will be challengers.

Meaningful campaign-finance reform has also been lacking. New York State has not adopted campaign spending caps, strict contribution limits, or public financing of campaigns to counteract the overwhelming advantage that incumbents enjoy in raising money. Each year, in a long-standing Albany tradition, the Assembly Democrats propose such reforms, fully aware that their bill will die in the Republican Senate; having scored some political points, the Democrats then allow the matter to fade quietly away until the following year. Meanwhile, special-interest money flows ever more rapidly into the campaign coffers of both parties. In 1992 the ten most generous political action committees gave $3.2 million to legislative candidates, a 27 percent increase over 1990. The New York State United Teachers union was the largest contributor to legislative candidates, followed by municipal labor unions, medical and legal associations, and real estate interests. Fund-raising techniques frowned upon even in Washington—such as "breakfast clubs," in which lobbyists pay annual dues to hold private meetings with lawmakers—are routine in Albany.

Gerrymandering in New York State has achieved a degree of virtuosity rarely found elsewhere, ensuring Albany's two majorities. Every ten years the Legislature redraws the boundaries of its own electoral districts, nominally to take into account demographic changes reflected in the latest census figures. While many states turn such reapportionment over to redistricting boards that operate with at least some independence from state lawmakers, New York leaves the process firmly in the hands of the majority party in each chamber. In 1992, the last time reapportionment occurred, the Senate's redrawing of its electoral map protected Republican members while forcing several Democratic incumbents to run against each other. In turn, the Assembly's redistricting increased the vulnerability of Assembly Republicans.

The Legislature's redistricting plan must be passed as a package and signed into law by the governor. During the past two decades the institution's leaders have honored an informal agreement allowing each chamber to redraw its own districts without interference from the other. Thus Senate Republicans don't try to defend Assembly Republicans, while Assembly Democrats leave their Senate Democratic colleagues to the wolves. "There's nothing right about this process," grumbled Assembly minority leader Clarence Rappleyea, following passage of the 1992 redistricting legislation. Although Governor Cuomo denounced the Senate Republican portion of that year's redistricting plan as blatant gerrymandering, support for the plan within the two chambers was sufficient to withstand a threatened veto, which in any event never materialized.

Dominance by the majority parties is not limited to the once-a-decade reapportionment process. It pervades everyday life in the Legislature. The institution's procedures give minority-party lawmakers little ability to speed or block the flow of legislation; indeed, the size of the minority party's staff and budget is largely determined by the majority party. Although thousands of bills are introduced in the Legislature each year, members of the minority sometimes go for years without passing any legislation; typically they spend their time making symbolic protests on the floor or at news conferences. Manfred Ohrenstein, announcing his retirement in 1994 after 20 years as Senate minority leader, was asked by reporters to cite instances in which the Senate majority needed Democratic votes to pass important legislation; he could think of only a few. Former Congressman Stephen Solarz, a Democratic member of the Assembly from 1968 to 1974, when it was under Republican control, has summed up the experience as "the American political equivalent of the Gulag Archipelago."

Central to majority-party dominance is a system of leadership that concentrates power in the hands of two people: the Assembly speaker and the Senate majority leader. These leaders have broad authority to make committee appointments, dole out perquisites, and allocate the institution's budget and staff resources. In the Senate the majority leader has the formal power to shelve any bill—a "one-person un-overridable veto," in the words of Common Cause's Andrew Greenblatt. The Assembly speaker's formal power to shelve any bill was eliminated in the mid-1970s in an effort to democratize the Legislature's internal processes. But in practice, the speaker's ability to derail legislation remains intact; and, unlike in the Senate, this power is now exercised informally, making it harder to tell where or why a bill stopped moving.

Sometimes the leaders simply tell their members how to vote. The majority in each house places a high priority on protecting its most vulnerable members, called "marginals"—relative newcomers, for example, or those from districts normally controlled by the opposition. When the majority seeks to raise taxes or pass other unpopular bills, marginals are allowed to vote against their party's position, provided there are enough votes to win without them. Most important decisions take shape at closed-door party caucuses; the outcome of votes taken on the floor is rarely in doubt. During Ralph Marino's tenure as Senate majority leader from 1989 until 1994, bills were almost never defeated in an actual vote; typically, if Marino opposed a piece of legislation, he did not allow it to reach the Senate floor.

Throughout the 1980s, New York's Legislature had the lowest turnover rate of any state lawmaking body in the country.

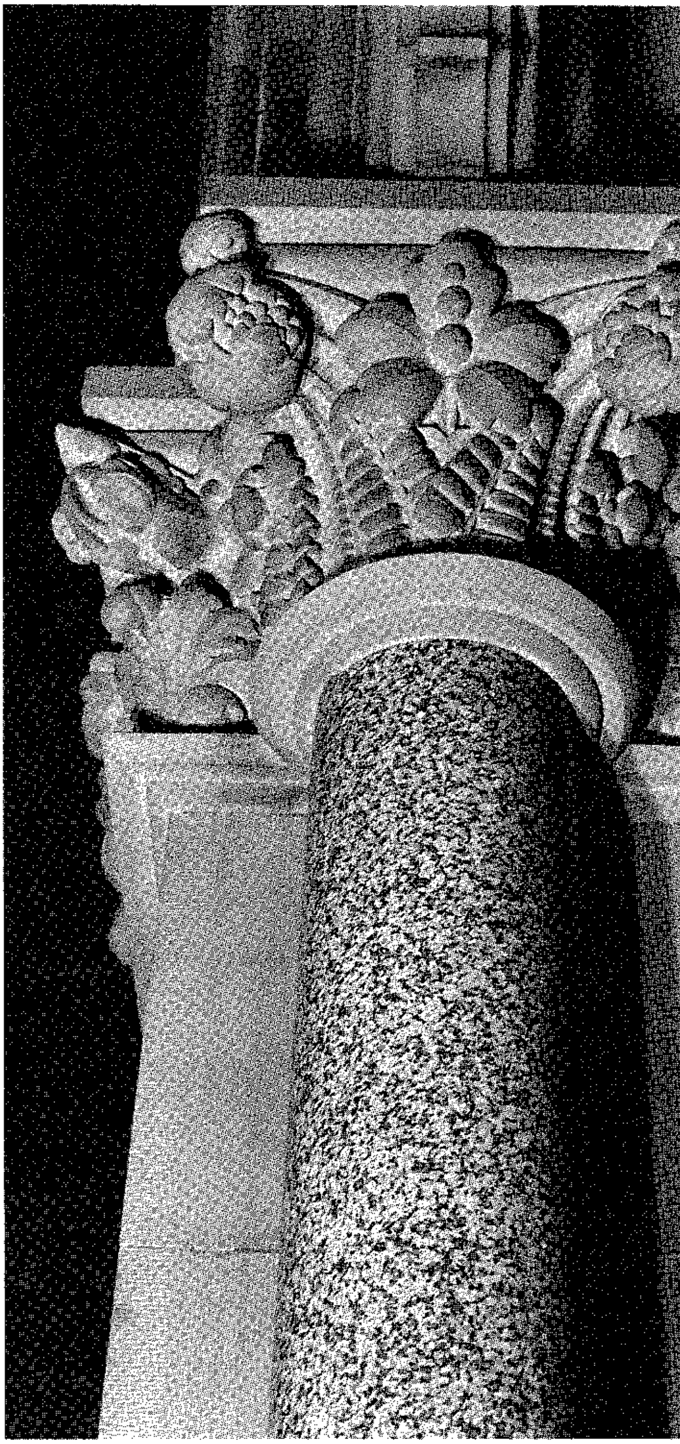
With a handful of people exercising this kind of power behind the scenes, the Legislature engages in little meaningful debate about public policy. Meanwhile, the absence of competitive districts assures little debate at the local level. Growing public apathy about state politics is one consequence; in recent state legislative elections, New York has ranked near the bottom among all states in voter participation. Elsewhere in the country, state lawmaking branches have emerged as focal points of popular discontent, with voters directing their ire against the self-serving insider politics of incumbents and special-interest groups. In more than 20 states, voters have imposed term limits on their state representatives. In New York State, however, the lawmaking branch barely appears on the public radar screen—a Stealth Legislature.

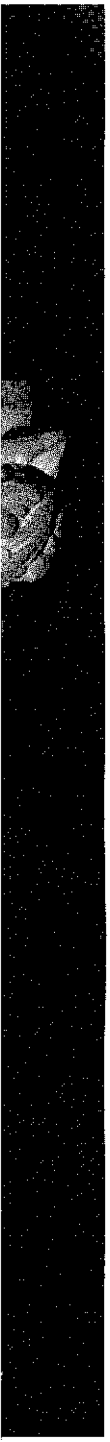
Public indifference runs particularly deep in New York City, where local and national politics have long overshadowed events in Albany; the downstate press limits its minuscule Albany coverage to the governor, traditionally a figure of national importance. "There's no visibility to state legislative behavior in New York City," says political scientist Gerald Benjamin of the State University of New York. "Why would people want to fix something they don't know about?"

Hidden from the public eye, the Legislature has created a vast engine of spending, taxation, and debt. The majority in each chamber has fortified its power by funneling money to interest groups and constituents. Each majority has docilely allowed the other to shower largesse upon its own power base—upstate and the suburbs for Senate Republicans; New York City for Assembly Democrats—in exchange for a fairly free hand to do the same. In essence, the two majorities have resolved their disputes over budget priorities by agreeing to spend more money on everything.

As a result, while New York State lingered in recession during the early 1990s, Assembly Democrats and Senate Republicans pursued policies guaranteed to stall economic growth: the lawmakers passed a billion-dollar-plus net increase in taxes and fees each year from 1989 to 1994. Consequently, New York continued losing jobs, even as the rest of the nation recovered. Says Fred Siegel, a professor at Cooper Union, "The Legislature essentially divides up the pie to all the organized interest groups, both left and right, independent of the viability of the state economy."

Many of the strongest Albany pressure groups, either part of the public sector or





closely associated with it, have a vested interest in high government spending. Unions representing both teachers and civil-service employees have close alliances with the majority parties of both chambers. With the teachers pressing for higher education spending, New York's annual per pupil cost has soared to $9,000, more than 50 percent above the national average. The Civil Service Employees Association and the Public Employees Federation, among the most powerful players in Albany politics, showed their clout earlier this year when both chambers of the Legislature voted to raise pensions for retired state and local workers—a raid on the treasury that Governor Pataki vetoed.

The majority in each chamber is closely allied with groups wary of cutting back New York State's $19 billion Medicaid system: Senate Republicans with hospitals and nursing homes, Assembly Democrats with patients' groups and social service organizations. As a result, New York has created the most expensive Medicaid system of any state, with generous eligibility rules and nearly all the optional benefits the Washington permits. By the early 1990s, New York accounted for almost 20 percent of Medicaid spending nationwide, even though the state has less than 10 percent of the nation's Medicaid recipients. The Pataki administration has sought to navigate this political minefield by spreading the pain of its big proposed Medicaid cuts among providers and recipients: the unintended result might be a unified front against any major change in the system, instead of the enmity of just one legislative chamber.

The partisan division of the Legislature has meant that virtually any interest group can find powerful allies in one chamber. Senate Republicans have championed aid for suburban school districts along with prison construction, which they regard in part as a jobs program for upstate districts. Assembly Democrats have given priority to welfare, public housing, and other social programs. The State University of New York and insurance companies are Republican priorities, the City University of New York and trial lawyers Democratic ones.

Unsurprisingly, lobbying is one of Albany's big growth industries, with spending by interest groups to influence state legislation skyrocketing from $5.7 million in 1978 to $38.5 million in 1993. Moreover, even these eloquent statistics grossly understate the amount of lobbying; an executive who flies to Albany, stays in a hotel, and buys a legislator lunch to discuss legislation need report only the lunch as a lobbying expense. Though much lobbying occurs while legislation is still in draft form, lobbyists are required to report efforts to influence a bill only after it's been printed. A freewheeling lobbying culture flourishes in Albany, with the interest groups that are major campaign contributors bombarding legislators with innumerable small gifts, such as fancy dinners and tickets to sporting events. Many of the most effective lobbyists are former lawmakers or legislative aides, who understand the legislative process firsthand. Former Assembly Speaker Mel Miller, forced from office in 1991 by a fraud indictment (he was later acquitted), returned to Albany several years later as a lobbyist for health-care companies and other clients.

Hidden from the public eye, the Legislature has created a vast engine of spending, taxation, and debt.

Since neither majority can pass legislation without the other, horse trading is incessant. During budget negotiations in 1994, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver derided Republican proposals for business-tax reductions as "corporate welfare" but ultimately went along, once Republicans agreed to give New York City $42 million of a $62 million school-repair fund. "The Republicans and the Democrats have basically walked in lockstep on a lot of issues," says Thomas W. Carroll, a Pataki administration official and former president of Change-NY, a free-market fiscal watchdog group in Albany. "From time to time, the only thing that flared up was the fight over the spoils, not over the basic question of whether there should be spoils."

Almost two decades ago, following the mid-1970s collapse of the Urban Development Corporation and the near-bankruptcy of New York City, Governor Hugh Carey temporarily succeeded in slowing Albany's tax-and-spend dynamo. He used his line-item veto to keep state spending in line with inflation. But in 1982, Carey's last year in office, the Legislature finally put an end to that period of unaccustomed restraint, repeatedly overriding the governor's vetoes. During the next 12 years, the Legislature and the Cuomo administration raised spending by an average 7 percent a year. Even New York's high taxes have not been enough to support this spending: the state has relied increasingly on borrowing by its public authorities. Last year, for example, Senate Republicans and Assembly Democrats voted to allow the New York State Thruway Authority to issue $225 million in debt, without voter approval.

The New York Times smelled a rat in Senator Nancy-Larraine Hoffman's allocation of $75,000 to an upstate institution, the Museum of Cheese.

The Legislature also has given bipartisan support to padding the state budget with hundreds of millions of dollars for lawmakers' pet projects—senior-citizen centers, community athletic clubs, local cultural institutions—euphemistically known as "members' items," "capital projects," and "legislative initiatives." Buying good will in members' home districts, such projects remain virtually invisible to the rest of the state. Only occasionally does an item attract broader, usually negative, publicity, as when the *New York Times* smelled a rat in Senator Nancy-Larraine Hoffman's allocation of $75,000 to an upstate institution called the Museum of Cheese.

On matters that can't be settled by higher spending, the Assembly Democrats and Senate Republicans frequently deadlock. Crime is a case in point. In 1994 the Republicans killed a Democratic proposal for an assault weapon ban. Meanwhile, the Democrats derailed a "three-strikes-and-you're-out" bill for violent felons that was supported both by the Republicans and also by Governor Cuomo, who wanted it to be the centerpiece of his reelection campaign.

Gridlock, instead of having the beneficial effect of restraining big government, often has had the opposite result of freezing archaic programs and regulations into place. In 1993 the Legislature was paralyzed for weeks over Republican proposals to change New York City's rent regulations; Democrats eventually agreed to begin removing rent protection for a handful of the wealthiest tenants in exchange for a four-year delay of any further discussion of rent regulation. The debate also demonstrated the Legislature's blasé attitude toward possible conflicts of interest: among the defenders of rent stabilization were a number of lawmakers (including Saul Weprin, then the Assembly speaker) who themselves lived in rent-stabilized apartments but were not required to disclose the fact when voting on the subject.

While presiding over the expansion of state government, the Legislature has bloated itself with bureaucracy. The institution's budget has nearly doubled during the past decade, reaching $177 million in 1994, the largest budget of any state lawmaking body nationwide. The legislative staff, numbering some 4,400, is more than twice as big as that of California's Legislature, which represents 13 million more citizens.

Featherbedding and patronage of course help swell the numbers. The *Syracuse Herald-Journal* published articles last year detailing the lawmakers' hiring of relatives, political cronies, and ex-legislators, sometimes for jobs with ill-defined responsibilities. After Queens Democratic Assemblyman Morton Hillman narrowly lost his reelection campaign in 1992, the Assembly appointed him special assistant to the Legislative Commission on Water Resource Needs of Long Island, a newly concocted position. According to the *Herald-Journal*, one in ten lawmakers has had a relative on the Legislature's payroll during the past two years—including Senate majority leader Joseph Bruno, whose daughter Susan worked until recently as a secretary for the Assembly Republican minority. The legislative budget also pays for numerous perks, such as a fleet of several dozen automobiles for senior lawmakers and their aides. Ralph Marino, when he was Senate majority leader, assigned himself two state-owned cars: one for Albany, one for his Long Island home.

Expanding staff and budget have provided lawmakers ever more powerful instruments of incumbency protection. Many staffers who perform constituent services during the legislative session go on temporary leave during election season to work on campaigns. The line between governing and political activity sometimes blurs. The Legislature's television studios, for example, use public funds to produce programs featuring individual legislators for broadcast on public-access channels in their home districts; filled with flattering images and upbeat interviews, these programs look remarkably like campaign propaganda. Republican Senator John Daly's weekly 15-minute legislative review, for instance, has opened with clips of Daly on the Senate floor and at a news conference, with a voice-over saying, "In Albany, fighting for you—State Senator John Daly."

Needless to say, the Legislature doesn't make it easy to study the budget that pays for all these things. It provides only a bare outline of its payroll and other expenses. True, lawsuits have recently forced greater openness, so that both chambers will soon begin to release itemized reports of each member's spending, something that Congress and many state legislatures have been doing for years. But much murkiness will remain. Money goes not just to individual members but also to a byzantine tangle of committees and commissions, such as the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment, which employs dozens of permanent staffers for the once-a-decade redistricting process. The Legislature's budget allows funds to be shifted among spending categories at whim. Moreover, money appropriated for the Legislature's operations but not spent is rolled over from year to year, generating a surplus that totaled over $60 million as of last year. Not included in the Legislature's regular budget, this kitty is controlled by the institution's leaders, with virtually no accountability.

In addition to the biggest staffs and budgets of all state legislators nationwide, New York's lawmakers have the biggest paychecks, with base salaries of $57,500 a year, in most cases supplemented by annual bonuses that range from $6,500 to $30,000, based largely on committee assignments. In other large states, the annual salaries for state lawmakers range from California's $52,500 to Texas's $7,200. In many states, too, independent boards set legislative salaries—unlike New York, where lawmakers control their own compensation, bound only by the requirement that any raises be deferred until the next legislative term.

Legislative reformers have made cogent arguments on both sides of the question of whether state lawmakers should be full-time or part-time. New York's Legislature, however, combines some of the worst features of both systems. Most members, seeing lawmaking as their primary source of income, have grown insulated from the state's economic condition, while focusing on preserving their own jobs. At the same time, the institution's conflict-of-interest rules regarding outside income are weak: legislators who are part-time election lawyers have helped to craft the state's election laws, for example—making it hard to know whether the arcane laws were written merely to protect incumbents or also to provide work for members' firms in New York's lucrative field of election-law litigation.

Given the New York State Legislature's long history of avoiding significant reform, there is not much cause for optimism that the institution will impose dramatic change upon itself now. Seeking to be regarded as reformers, the Legislature's leaders might well eliminate some of the institution's more visible defects, but they aren't likely to dismantle the basic mechanisms of incumbency protection and majority self-perpetuation. "People don't change systems that reward them," says State University of New York political scientist Gerald Benjamin.

Yet even some modest reform—driven in part by pressure from Governor Pataki—would be a beginning. Recently, moves toward a more open legislative process have occurred. Joseph Bruno, shortly after becoming Senate majority leader in January, curbed the chamber's practice of holding all-night sessions, which in the past have been forums for cutting last-minute deals and passing legislation with little public scrutiny. Bruno and Sheldon Silver, who became Assembly speaker a year ago, have agreed to create a system of conference committees to reconcile differences in legislation between the chambers—aimed especially at ending the annual closed-door budget negotiations among the governor, the Senate majority leader, and the Assembly speaker, which Governor Pataki has announced he would have no part of.

However, Governor Pataki's proposals for more fundamental institutional reform face enormous hurdles in the Legislature. The governor has called for state constitutional amendments enacting term limits for legislators and allowing voters to initiate ballot referenda. Unsurprisingly, legislators show little enthusiasm for limiting their own terms, and they are wary of the potential of an initiative-and-referendum amendment to threaten legislative prerogatives. In virtually every state that has enacted term limits, voters, not legislators, placed the issue on the ballot (and term limits now exist in almost every state in which voters have initiative power). Around the country, ballot initiatives have cut legislative staffs, set limits on tax hikes, and otherwise removed authority from the hands of state lawmakers. New York's legislators, unlikely to pass a constitutional amendment allowing anything like that to happen here, may instead enact a weakened form of initiative-and-referendum, narrowly defining what issues can be put on the ballot or creating a new set of complicated signature-gathering rules, similar to that required for candidates to get on the ballot.

At the moment, policy changes, rather than institutional reforms, are occupying center stage in Albany. Governor Pataki, having won office on a tax-cut pledge and inherited a massive budget deficit, enjoys a favorable political climate for tax and spending reductions. The Senate Republicans seem more willing than usual to put their limited-government rhetoric into practice, reflecting in part the influence of the relatively conservative Bruno. The Assembly Democrats are able to offer only limited resistance, since some of their members represent upstate and suburban districts where Pataki won handily. But once these political currents have passed, in the absence of substantial institutional reform, little will prevent the Legislature from resuming its tax-and-spend ways.

Looming in the background of all this, however, is the possibility of a state constitutional convention that would circumvent the lawmakers altogether. The State Constitution requires a referendum every 20 years on whether to hold a convention; the next vote must be held by 1997. A convention could consider, and submit for voter approval, changes to the Constitution—from term limits, campaign-finance reform, and changing the size of legislative staffs and salaries to requiring a supermajority for tax increases, or subjecting tax hikes to a popular referendum.

It's an idea well worth considering. No other avenue for reform is more likely to change the Legislature fundamentally. Indeed, some reforms, such as the creation of an independent redistricting board, are inconceivable any other way, given the role that gerrymandering plays in keeping Albany's two majorities in power.

The legislators always resisted Mario Cuomo's calls for a constitutional convention. The fact that they do not want a convention may be the best reason for having one. ●

California's Back-to-Reality Welfare Reformer

Carolyn Lochhead

With no illusions about her clients, California Social Services Director Eloise Anderson is instituting reforms that make sense.

With red-hot intensity, Eloise Anderson despises the welfare system she heads for California—the state that consumes fully a quarter of the nation's spending on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the main cash welfare program.

Anderson views AFDC as a ruinously destructive social force that has undermined family formation, marginalized poor men, and stunted children. If Congress frees the states to run welfare, as it may well do, Anderson is determined to remake California's welfare system with the interests of children uppermost in her mind. The current system, she says, is nothing less than "government-sponsored child abuse." And the only way to stop it is to "stop pumping in the money." At the dawn of the welfare system's biggest upheaval since the Great Society, the example she sets in this huge state that is ever the nation's bellwether will be crucial.

She has strong support from her boss, Governor Pete Wilson, who has made welfare reform a top priority for his second term. As a tested political plank that helped assure Wilson's reelection in 1994, Anderson-style welfare reform could serve as the springboard for a possible Wilson bid for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination.

Wilson himself calls welfare an impending fiscal and social calamity. Nearly 9 percent of the state's population—some 2.9 million people—is now on AFDC, at a cost of $7.2 billion, half of it paid by federal taxes. California spends twice as much on AFDC as New York State, the next-highest spender, with a population and welfare caseload roughly half the size of California's. That $7.2 billion does not include the host of programs that attend AFDC and cost tens of billions more: food stamps, Medicaid, foster care, and public housing. Including these programs, the total welfare caseload in California is some 5 million people.

The caseload has mushroomed by 40 percent since 1990, while the population has grown only 9.4 percent. Citizen children of illegal immigrants make up 14 percent of the caseload. A third of state births are out of wedlock, and more than half of California women on AFDC had their first child in their teens.

ED ANDERSON/COURTESY CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

California welfare chief Eloise Anderson persuading her boss, Governor Pete Wilson.

Deciding that welfare reform would be key to his political future, Governor Wilson mounted an exhaustive national search for a new social services director in 1992. He hired Anderson away from Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, whose much-watched welfare reforms she had helped design. She now heads a $16 billion agency.

Anderson believes that the AFDC check is the root of a social catastrophe that she has watched ripen since she began her career 30 years ago as a social worker in Toledo, Ohio. She believes that society must find the will to say, "If you decide to engage in an intimate sexual relationship with each other, there are consequences to that behavior. You and dad need to figure out how you're going to take care of that child. Right now, nobody feels that they are responsible. It's the government. Well, that's got to stop."

Now 52, Anderson grew up in a poor Toledo neighborhood that was absorbing a huge postwar immigration from two very different cultures—from the South and from Eastern Europe. In 1965 she graduated from Central State University near Dayton with a degree in sociology and went to work as a community organizer for a settlement house. Later she became what then was called a "woman's worker": she aided adoptions, helped mothers in danger of losing their children, and tried to get women off AFDC.

In a matter-of-fact style bare of sentimental flourishes, Anderson says her father, after failing at several businesses, worked as a factory hand, laborer, and school janitor. Her mother "cleaned houses and took care of other people's children."

"I grew up around people who were poor," Anderson explains. Unusual among policy makers, she can draw on knowledge that comes from firsthand experience. "I lived next door to and around people who were on AFDC, so I know the games that they play," she says. "This is not living in the suburbs and saying, 'Well, this is the way these people are.'" Though she follows the academic research to see how it compares with what she sees happening on the ground, Anderson spends a lot of time talking with welfare mothers. "I'm just a commoner," she says.

Anderson's philosophy rests on respect for poor people and a conviction that AFDC recipients act in their own self-interest. "These people are not inferior," she insists. "They are not irrational." Nothing inflames her more than the idea—a powerful undercurrent on both the conservative and the liberal sides of the welfare debate—that AFDC recipients cannot control their behavior, cannot be held responsible for their lives, and cannot take care of themselves.

With Wilson's blessing, Anderson has carried out several major AFDC reforms in the face of relentless opposition. She started by cracking down on fraud. Then she steadily ratcheted down grant levels while sharply boosting work incentives. She has sought to deny additional money to AFDC families who have additional children in order to discourage women from bearing babies they can't support. She hopes this year to cut checks to able-bodied AFDC recipients sharply after two years.

At present, with welfare not yet reformed at the national level, she faces daunting obstacles. The State Legislature has balked repeatedly at enacting her proposals. The federal government has been slow to grant regulatory waivers that would allow the state to carry out those reforms that do get past the Legislature. And the courts have stalled reform by intervening on the side of welfare advocates. Yet each year Anderson and Wilson have reintroduced their programs, getting more through each time. "I play hardball," she says. "I love a good fight, if I think I've got any chance to win it."

Anderson's approach to welfare begins with the idea that society must decide where its obligations end. In her view, no able-bodied adult who has never worked—mothers included—should receive aid. "You can't take out of the pot until you contribute to the pot," she asserts. Anderson hopes to abolish AFDC, replacing it with something akin to unemployment insurance, and to move to foster care or group homes the children of parents who cannot or will not support them.

Anderson contends that AFDC, which New Deal reformers originally conceived as a program to support widows, has deprived poor men of a place in the family. "This program has systematically removed fathers from the home," Anderson maintains. "AFDC has created itself as the husband, and no poor man who makes the minimum wage can compete with it."

Echoing Charles Murray—she jokes that she's older than Murray, so he's echoing her—she contends that the AFDC check changed the conversation between men and women, robbing men of their historic family role as breadwinner. Fathers do not naturally abandon their children; what she has watched is women push men away because the government has become a better provider. "In poor families, what we have said is that you don't have to have the dad at the table. And that I think is a disaster, both for these families and for society."

As for teenage mothers, in her view they are not women but girls, and they should be with their mothers or in foster care but not on AFDC. Anderson is pushing hard this year to deny AFDC to these girls, for reasons that go right to the heart of why AFDC is so catastrophically destructive to children.

In the great welfare debate swirling through Washington and state capitals, the most potent argument against major cuts in AFDC is that children will suffer. Even among liberals, not much sympathy remains these days for non-working adults. But how can one not be moved by the plea that children should not be made to pay for the sins of their parents? The seeming moral force of this argument could prove strong enough to derail radical change in AFDC.

But with compelling logic, Anderson argues that this is AFDC's big lie. However compassionate its intent, sending checks to a teenage mother to set up her own apartment, Anderson argues, is deadly for both the teen and her child. There she becomes prey to the older men who father her additional children. And there her child depends for life and nurture on an American teenager, who remains perpetually immature through AFDC's extension of adolescence that leaves her, at 14, 15, 16—or even 25—literally irresponsible.

Anderson visited a home where the 18- and 14-year-old daughters of an unwed welfare mother were both pregnant. Although the 14-year-old had watched her older sister give birth, she declared that no such thing would happen to her. "This girl had no clue, even after watching it, what it was going to take to give birth, let alone to be a parent," Anderson recalls. "And we're going to let her have her own apartment, raise her kid. I will tell you, that outcome is going to be terrible."

Think, Anderson says, of a kid who wants a puppy. "You know the scenario. 'I'm going to take care of it, Dad. Just give me the puppy. I really will be responsible.' Three weeks into the puppy, the whole thing has worn off. It's old now, and they're onto something new. Who does the getting up in the morning and taking the dog out? Who feeds the dog? What do you think happens with a fragile little infant in a home with a teen?" It's hardly surprising, she says, that the children of welfare often end up as delinquents or welfare mothers themselves.

Boys, especially in neighborhoods devoid of working men, grow up thinking men have no importance in families. "When a black boy grows up and looks out, he doesn't see around him black males doing anything except hanging out on the street. He goes home, and he looks at his family, and he doesn't see black men doing anything. He goes to school, and he doesn't see black men doing anything. What do you think happens to the psyche of this child?"

Under such circumstances, it's almost impossible for a woman to raise a son. "She herself is not fully developed; she has not worked out her relationships with men in her household. What does she know about boys? What does she know about men? She creates a pariah, and then we wonder, where is this coming from?" Astronomical sums of taxpayer money are going into such families, and AFDC may be the least of it, compared to the costs of drug use, foster care, juvenile courts, and prisons.

Welfare is at first less crippling for girls because AFDC allows them to "become somebody through childbearing," says Anderson. "It gives them a sense of worth because a child makes them a woman"—even though it thwarts their every other potential.

But Anderson argues that in the long run, AFDC destroys girls too. A common scenario is multiple births in rapid succession, beginning as young as 13 or 14. By the time such AFDC mothers are 22 or 23, Anderson says, "they're absolutely overwhelmed, and their own development hasn't progressed." Their next move is onto alcohol and drugs, in an effort to recapture the childhood they lost to pregnancy. They fail to care for their children, "and we wind up having all those kids in our child abuse and child neglect system. And if they're not so bad that you can't get to them, we still wind up with their daughters becoming pregnant just like their moms, and their sons winding up in our juvenile delinquency system.

'AFDC is not the place to have teen parenting,' Anderson argues. 'Giving them a check is not the way to handle it.'

"I would suggest that AFDC is not the place to have teen parenting," Anderson argues. "Giving them a check is not the way to handle it." If a girl cannot stay at home because of abuse, Anderson would put her and her child together in the same foster family, or, if that is not possible, into a group home with intensive help from social workers. The government should encourage adoption and eliminate obstacles to trans-racial adoption. Anderson doubts such a plan would ultimately be more expensive than what the government is doing now, because children growing up in nurturing homes would be less prone to crime and dependency.

Not everyone agrees. State Senator Theresa Hughes, an Inglewood Democrat chairing a committee on teenage pregnancy, called Anderson's proposal to make teen mothers live at home "appalling." "It's the dysfunctional family that sometimes causes a teen to get pregnant because she's seeking the love she doesn't get at home," Hughes told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Some girls should be encouraged to leave, even if they've never thought of it. They should be given an opportunity to live on their own, to become real women and mothers." But Anderson is surely right that this is a guarantee of more dysfunctional families, and that group homes are a far preferable alternative.

In keeping with her belief that only workers deserve taxpayer help, the first major reform that Anderson undertook in California was to alter fundamentally the work incentives facing recipients. She reduced the check for a family of three from $694 a month to $594. By September she hopes to cut it again, to $547. Then she wants a "transition grant" that would automatically drop—to $465 after six months and $375 after two years—to encourage recipients to get off the rolls. Families would, however, continue to get Medicaid for a year and food stamps for as long as they are eligible under federal rules.

'Even in good times, we get people on our caseloads. We have a segment of women who think somebody's supposed to take care of them.'

At the same time, she has restructured AFDC so that recipients can make up the cuts through work and a combination of child care subsidies and the federal earned-income tax credit. Before these changes, AFDC discouraged work by taking a dollar away in benefits for every dollar earned, destroying any incentive for part-time work. Now, part-time work at the minimum wage leaves a recipient better off. Those who go to work full-time are able to stay on the rolls and collect a reduced sum in AFDC and food stamps, so that work boosts income by several hundred dollars a month. A non-working mother of two on AFDC gets $1,131 a month in cash, food stamps, and Medicaid; if she takes a full-time job at the minimum wage, she ends up with $1,653, including Medicaid, AFDC, food stamps, and the earned-income tax credit. This is far from a perfect solution, though: it's hardly fair for welfare recipients to make more than minimum-wage workers who've never been on the dole.

Anderson also raised the savings limit for AFDC recipients to $2,000 in cash and $5,000 in a restricted account to buy a home, start a business, or go to college. Recipients also get help finding work through the California job training and placement program known as GAIN, which Anderson is trying to bolster by toughening sanctions for non-participation. From all these initiatives, the state projects savings this year of $100 million; in 22 months of the reforms, the share of recipients working part-time rose from 8 to 13 percent.

The emphasis is on minimum wage work, which Anderson wants to make respectable again. She rejects the widely held view that recipients need extensive training and education for higher-paying jobs in order to stay off welfare. Her life-tested, blue-collar belief is that work itself is a way to gain needed experience, knowledge, and self-discipline. Furthermore, for an unwed mother who has never worked and who probably dropped out of high school, a minimum wage job is a more reasonable goal than a $12-an-hour job. To train a completely inexperienced person for a higher-level job is too ambitious and therefore likely to fail, she believes.

Nor has she patience with the popular idea that there are not enough private-sector jobs. "I am amazed at how immigrants, illegal ones, find jobs—and how our regular folks can't find a job," Anderson says. In Midwestern cities, she recalls, "I watched work happen, and I watched work not happen. I watched us be in recession and not be in recession; but I watched people on AFDC not move. Even in good times, we were getting people on our caseloads. There's something else, beyond lack of jobs, going on." While vast numbers of women joined the workforce, "here we have a whole segment of women who think somebody's supposed to take care of them.

"If you tell me, 'I'm pregnant, and I've never worked,' I would say, 'What is wrong with you? I mean, go talk to your family; go talk to his family. But don't come here, because having a baby is not a crisis. That's a condition, and your behavior caused that.' But we go in there, and we say, 'We're going to rescue you from your own stupid behavior.' We need to stop that."

As for parents so irresponsible or incapacitated that they cannot support their children, Anderson asks, "What do we do with children now when a parent abuses and neglects them? If I have a parent, male or female, who tells me, 'I am not willing to go to work and take care of my child,' then I have to ask the question, 'Should you be a parent?' But we keep wanting to give folks money. I suggest that what we ought to be doing is questioning their responsibility."

Anderson argues that welfare advocates implicitly degrade those they claim to care about. The unspoken message behind the assertion that welfare recipients can't find jobs when immigrants easily find them, she says, is that recipients cannot compete with everyone else. Such attitudes, she contends, promote ugly racial stereotypes. The same dismissive implication underlies the advocates' nonjudgmental acceptance of out-of-wedlock childbearing. "We should say, 'Hey, aren't you talking about black folks here, and aren't you saying that black folks can't control their sexual behavior? Aren't you saying that black folks aren't capable of supporting their kids?' I mean, I will just take this and just wipe [advocates'] faces in it."

Similarly, Anderson regards as condescending the assumption, which some congressional critics of welfare reform hold, that abolishing AFDC would lead parents to abandon their children en masse, as if they cared nothing for them. But she takes equal umbrage at the view that the culture of dependency is irreversibly entrenched. "Now we're saying again that people don't have brains. You know, maybe it's my Christian upbringing," she says: "I was taught that a human animal had the intelligence to think things out—to make changes and to adapt—and the ability to have free will and choice. I don't buy that these people on AFDC can't do anything different from what they've been doing.

"These people are intelligent, and they make rational decisions, and they will make decisions that benefit them; and if having a child doesn't benefit them, they're not going to have kids," she insists. "If I have a daughter who gets pregnant, and I don't get any money for that kid, me and her are going to have a lot different conversation than we've been having in the past."

If, as Anderson hopes, the government abolishes AFDC, she concedes that the transition will not be easy. But she thinks it could occur faster than many expect. People are afraid of the idea of doing away with AFDC "because they've been told that if we do something different, the sky is going to fall," Anderson says. But to be paralyzed by fear of changing the system is to ignore the horrors it is causing now. "People are acting like it is a harmless system," she says. "But it does serious harm. We've got to do something different, because this is not working."

Anderson, divorced and now remarried, vows when she retires "to go back to Wisconsin and sit on my farm and do my fishing and canoeing. And hopefully my kids will decide to have grandchildren for me. I promised them that if they wait [to have kids] until I finish this task, I would do the daycare for them."

She has three children, "one every way you can have it": a foster daughter, an adopted daughter, and a biological son. "And if I would have stayed married to my first husband longer," she says, "I'd have probably had two or three more children. I love children; I absolutely adore children." That's what drives her as she works to transform the welfare system. "I think that children are our future," she says, "and we're crapping on 'em big time." ●

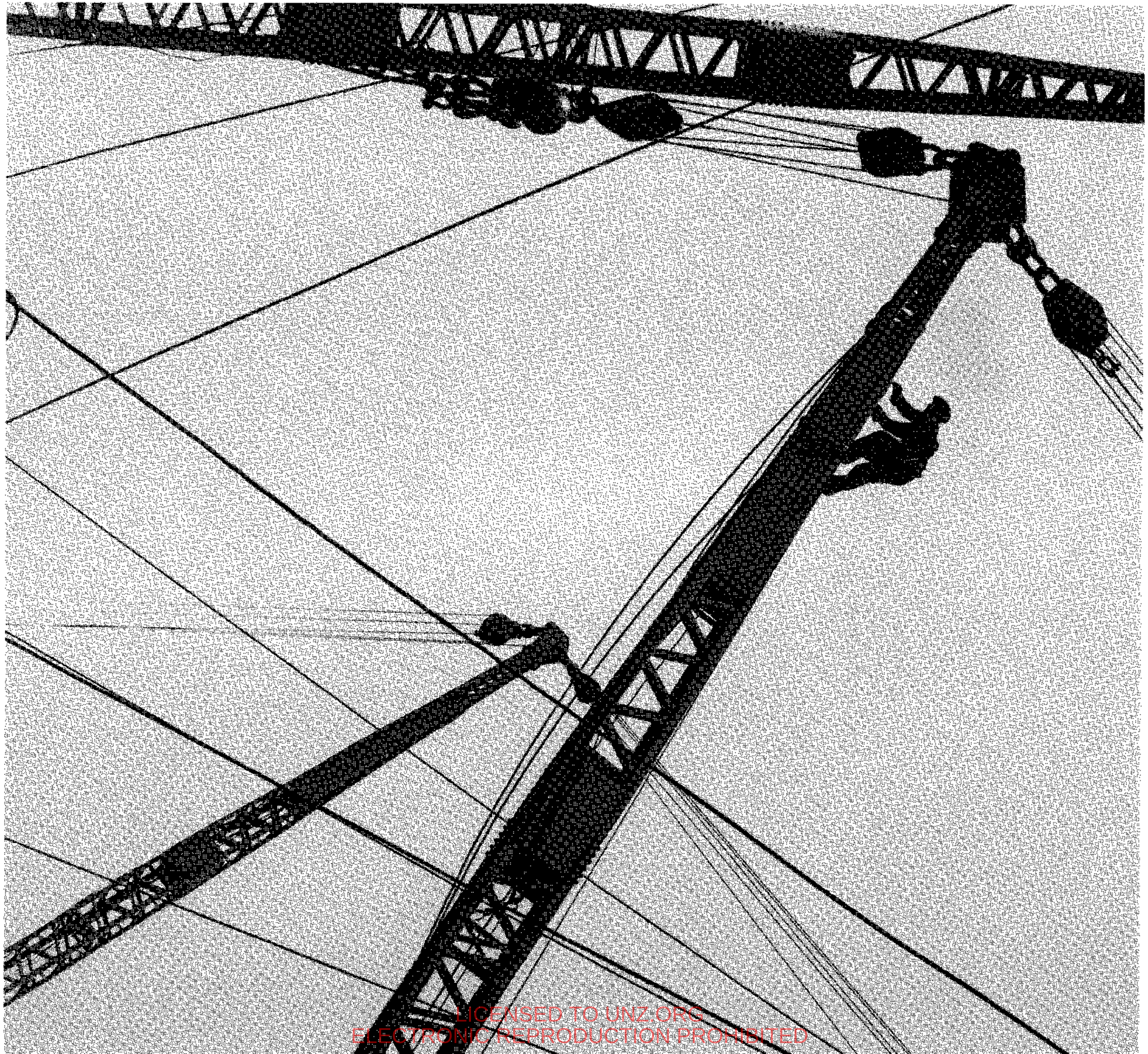
THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING GOES UP

1930-31

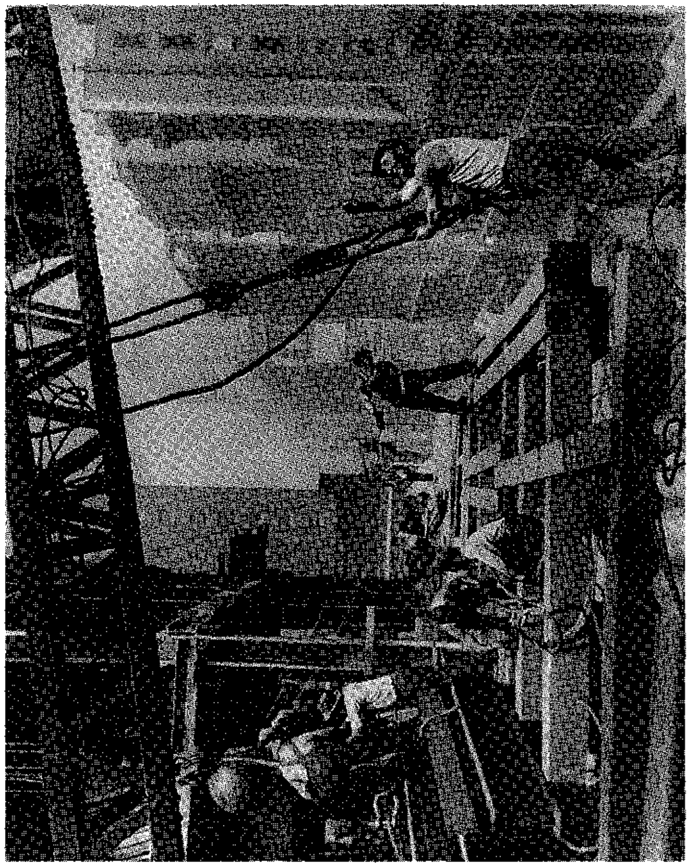
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

by LEWIS HINE

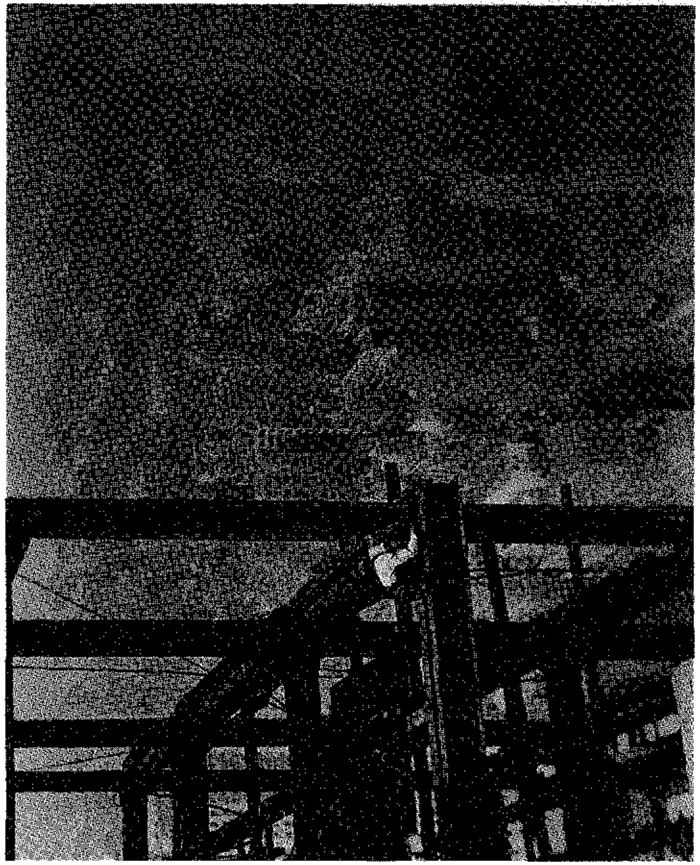
COURTESY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

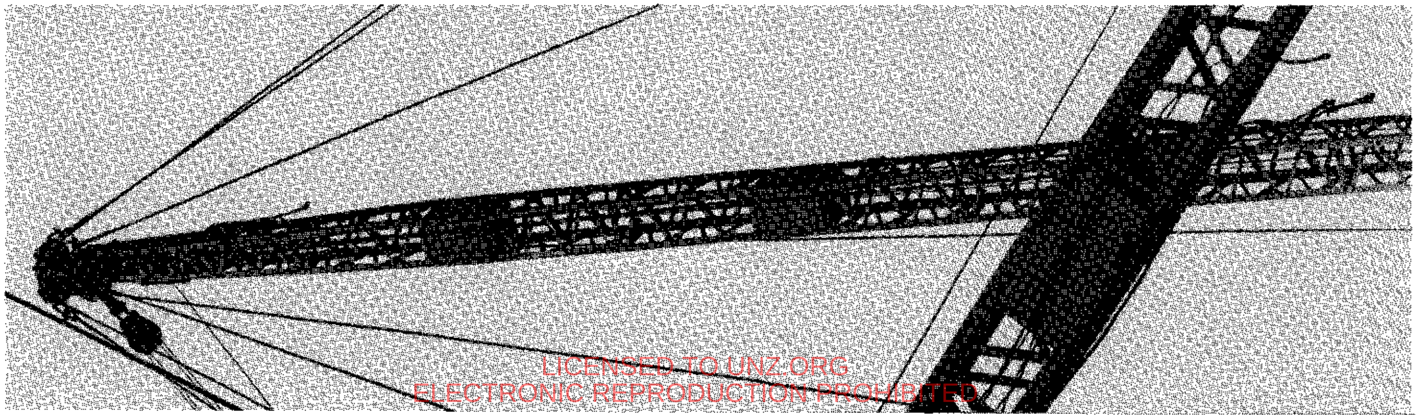


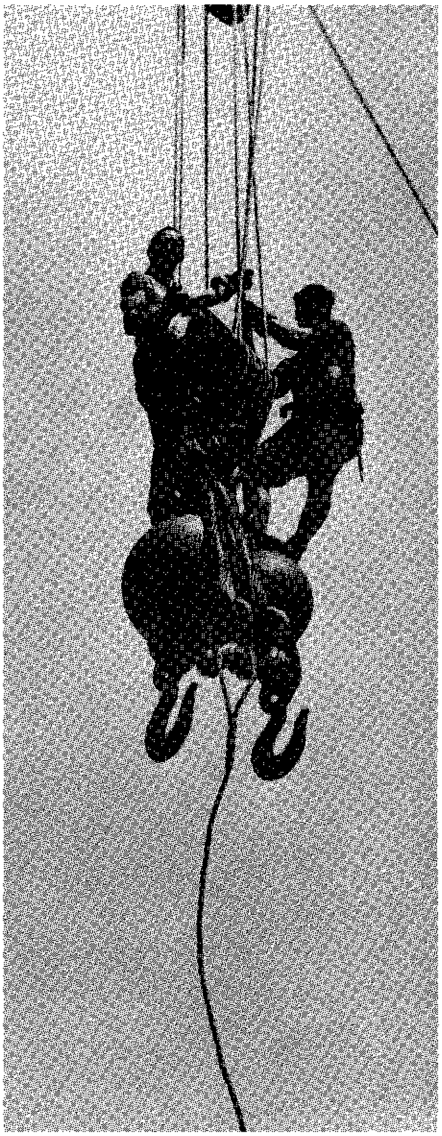
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



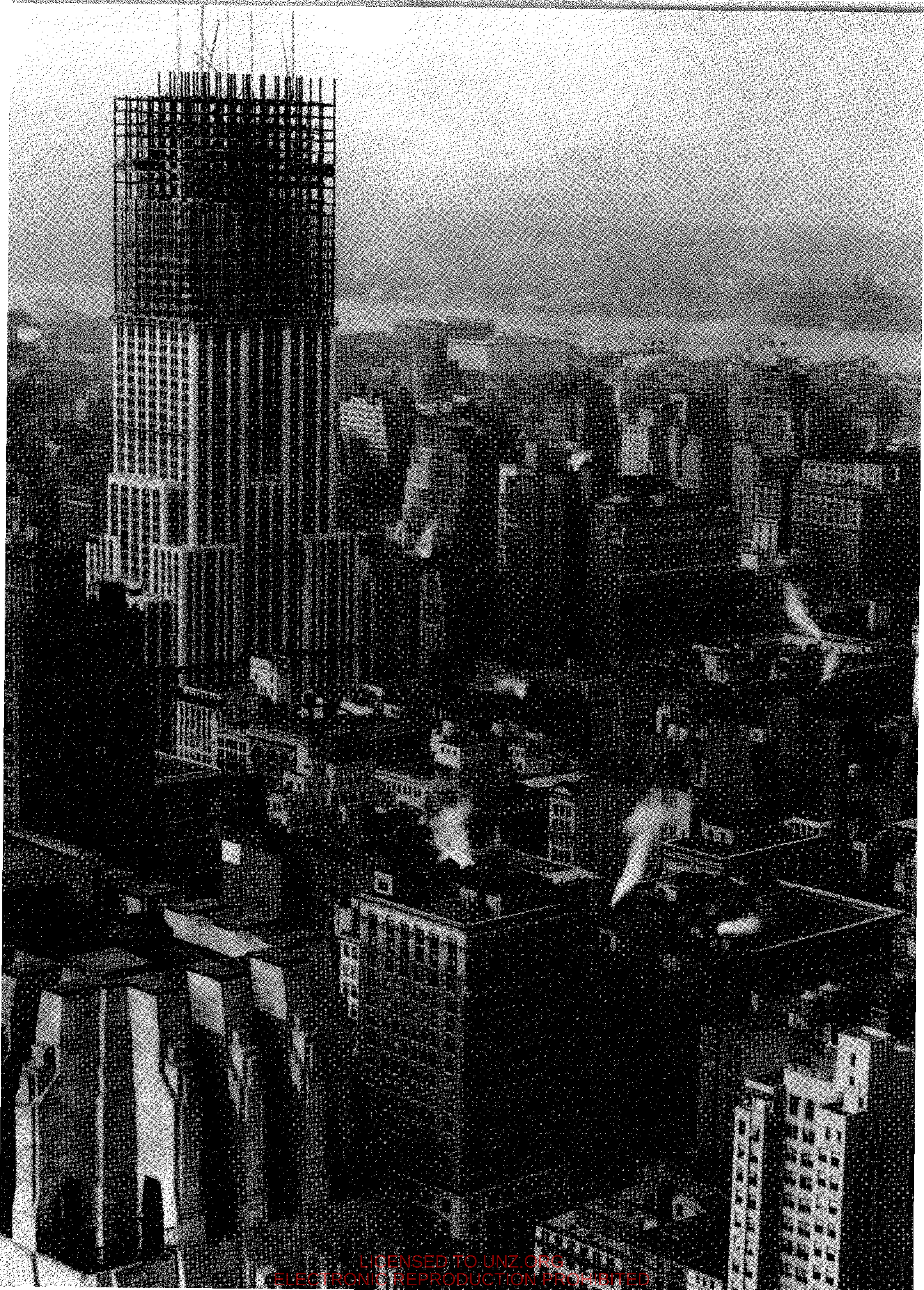
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



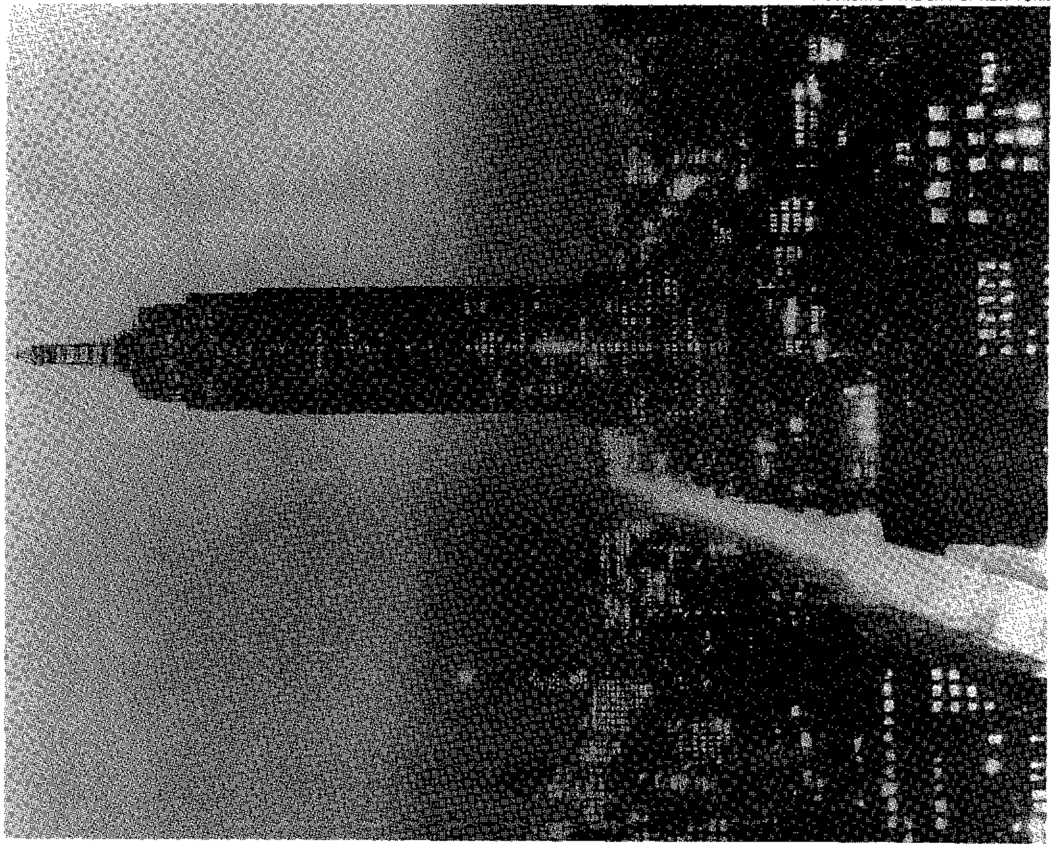




COURTESY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE (2)



MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



COURTESY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

A Horseplayer's Line on OTB

Daniel Seligman

When even customers hate the world's only money-losing bookmaker, it's time to privatize.

Poor OTB. New York City's Off-Track Betting Corporation gets no respect from anybody.

Not all its critics and bad-mouthers make the same discreditable points, however. Voting against OTB with their feet and wallets are the horseplayers of New York, who now do far less loitering than previously at the organization's betting parlors. OTB's "handle" (total bets received) is slipping badly. It was $742 million in fiscal 1994, down from over $1 billion in 1988. What gripes horseplayers is not that they lose—to the tune of $185 million a year—but that their payoff is so meager when they win. The house keeps about 25 percent of the total handle, compared with the 19 percent that the betting operations at the tracks themselves take. The difference mainly reflects OTB's much-loathed 5 percent surcharge on most winning tickets.

The crowds in OTB's 80 betting parlors also have cause to complain about the service and amenities. The rooms are dirty and paper-strewn. Only a few have rest rooms, even though a high fraction of the patrons come to stay for the whole afternoon.

But after all, the New York City OTB, like its five smaller counterparts upstate and on Long Island, was not established for the convenience of bettors. It was established to extract as much money as possible from them, while giving back as little as possible. Their grievances are largely ignored by both the media and the political establishment, not to mention OTB management: every politician and consumer advocate knows in his bones there is no percentage in sticking up for gamblers.

Anyone poking his head into an OTB parlor will instantly observe that he is among politically cloutless lowlifes. On a recent afternoon at the West 48th Street branch, near Rockefeller Center, I observed that my own was the only necktie in the place, that English was a second language for most of the patrons, and a good bet for their median occupation would have been security guard. The betting-parlor crowd is boisterous, talkative, full of little big shots making loud, authoritative pronouncements: "I like the six. I don't like the two." Several years ago, when I was visiting Edinburgh, I stopped in at several of the Ladbroke betting parlors and was struck by the eerie similarity between OTB's downscale customers and those in Scotland.

Illustrations by Louie Turchioe

In the interests of full disclosure, I need to mention that I am a veteran patron of OTB and look forward to a time when its customers have a better deal. I have my share of sad and hilarious stories—all instructive—about the agency's management style, as seen at ground level.

February 15, 1988: my Superclub saga begins. I have recently opened an OTB Superclub account, which enables one to make bets by telephone (against previously deposited funds) and to dodge the surcharge on winning bets. OTB officialdom has written to tell me that I can go to my neighborhood branch anytime after the 13th and get my green card validated. The Superclub account owner can take this "withdrawal privilege card" to an OTB branch anytime he has made a decent score and withdraw his winnings. Before the card can be validated its owner has to show up at one of the betting parlors and sign it in a special invisible ink readable only by OTB machines: if the card is lost, the finder won't be able to forge the card-owner's name and withdraw his hard-won balance. So I show up at my local betting parlor on East 69th Street in Manhattan, eager to sign, and instantly discover that the first teller I speak with has never heard about Superclub green cards. He disappears into the back office, returning with the message that I cannot sign up today, since "their pen ran out." I look blank but finally realize he is talking about the pen that writes in invisible ink. He says to come back in a few days. I come back on February 23, but the pen is still not working. I learn on March 26 that it is still not working. The helpful teller now suggests that I sign up at another branch. Meanwhile, I have made no progress figuring out how he can know that his invisible ink has vanished.

Racing Form

Months later I finally do succeed in signing up properly at East 69th Street, but my first big score with the new account does not take place until a year later. On Saturday, May 14, I show up at the branch to withdraw $2,500. I present the green Superclub card, fill out a withdrawal slip, show the manager my photo identification, and state that I prefer to be paid by check. I then wait, impatiently, for 40 minutes.

Finally, a branch official comes out of the back room with a check. I observe with dismay that the paper is smudged, that my name has been rendered in a near-illegible childish scrawl; also—and arguably more important—that the two zeros in the $2,500 are distinctly smaller than the other digits, so that someone could read the check to be for $25.00. I start to complain but then decide it will surely be okay, since elsewhere the check-writing machine has plainly written out "Two thousand five hundred dollars." So I deposit the check in the ATM and learn in midweek that my account has been credited for $25.00. The whole summer passes before the remaining $2,475 is in my bank account.

While the political establishment ignores the views of the customers, the politicians have a gripe of their own that cannot be ignored. OTB was established in 1970 primarily to generate revenue for New York City and has manifestly done a rotten job. The original plan was that OTB would make certain specified payments to the state, to the New York Racing Association (which runs the tracks), to several upstate cities and a few other minor claimants, and then, after taking care of its own operating expenses, turn over the "residual revenue" to the city. OTB's residual revenue was expected to be perhaps as much as $200 million a year—around $750 million in today's prices. An additional wrinkle, added during the city's 1975 fiscal crisis, was the 5 percent surcharge, whose entire proceeds would also go to the city.

It was all fantasy. The city never received much more than $60 million a year from OTB, and since 1992 the residual revenues have turned into residual deficits—$5.3 million last year. New York City received only $24 million from OTB during the year, all from the surcharge. The organization's long-run decline leaves one unable to exclude a possibility once mentioned by Edward V. Regan when he was state comptroller: that the city would end up supporting OTB. At both the state and city levels, the political establishment speaks publicly of OTB with ill-disguised contempt. "The only bookie operation in the world to lose money" was one of Rudolph Giuliani's guaranteed applause lines when he was running for mayor in 1993.

Also difficult to ignore is the hostility to OTB manifested by the New York Racing Association. NYRA is a quasi-public corporation created and regulated by New York State. Its mission is to operate the state's three Thoroughbred race tracks: Aqueduct during cold weather, Belmont Park during most of the warm-weather months, Saratoga for several summer weeks. NYRA is a not-for-profit corporation, but it is not supposed to lose money, and in recent years its operating losses have mounted as track attendance declined. In 1993, the most recent year for which complete figures are available, the loss soared to $28 million.

Twenty years ago Aqueduct would get a minimum of 12,000 hardened horseplayers even on a snow-blown day in February, and Belmont Park would get overflow crowds of 70,000 on Belmont Stakes day in June. The comparable figures today are perhaps 3,000 and 40,000. NYRA executives blame the losses on competition from lotteries, casinos, and the Meadowlands race track in New Jersey, on excessive New York State tax rates (the state takes around 5 percent of all bets at the track), on politicians who force Aqueduct to stay open all winter and run races in front of near-empty grandstands to keep those tax dollars flowing—and, of course, on OTB.

NYRA sees the off-track competition as unfair and unnatural. The racing association, after all, creates the product; why should this interloper sell it, in the process taking the lion's share of the betting revenues? Steve Crist, once a racing writer for the *New York Times* and now marketing director for NYRA, asks: "Is there any other business where the producers and retailers are competitors?" On an average day, OTB's handle is now about twice that at the track.

In some measure offsetting all this bad news, NYRA receives payments from OTB. Anticipating some shrinkage in on-track activity, the original law establishing OTB incorporated formulas requiring that it pass revenue from various kinds of bets to NYRA. The formulas resulted in payments of around $40 million in the late eighties, but the total has been tumbling as OTB's own economics have weakened, and last year it was around $28 million. No longer having any hope that OTB will just go away, NYRA people now hope to take over the organization—and have some prospects of success.

Should the city continue to run OTB? The answer seems obvious: of course not. If not the city, then who? Here the answer is less obvious, but I shall argue that the best bet is private operators (plural). I take it as a given that legal off-track betting in New York should continue to exist in some form, as preferable to illegal betting.

The case against the city as OTB proprietor seems overwhelming. For 25 years, under five mayors (counting Giuliani's first year), the agency has been badly run. The bad-management experience has not always been quite the same. The prior regime, headed by civil rights activist Hazel Dukes, was marked by horrifying racial tensions and left OTB with multiple, still-unresolved lawsuits by senior executives claiming they had been forced out of their jobs because of their race (white). But certain other themes seem to recur in every administration.

Begin with the fact that successive mayors have used OTB as a patronage vehicle for supporters. I am far from sure that Mayor Giuliani is now doing the same thing, but some reporters and City Council staff people clearly believe it is happening; they argue that patronage is the most parsimonious explanation for his curious reluctance to move toward privatization, despite much pro-privatization campaign rhetoric. Indeed, a month after the election, Giuliani was still talking privatization, indicating his receptivity to any decent bid for OTB by NYRA. This script didn't last long, though; it was replaced by one in which the mayor has given OTB yet another opportunity to turn itself around and get profitable—after which it will get sold.

Why rebuild OTB if you are planning to sell it? The standard answer given by the city—for example, by Richard J. Schwartz, Giuliani's chief adviser on privatization issues—is that no outside bidder would pay a decent price for the organization while it is losing money. Three years ago, when OTB's residual revenues had begun turning negative, the city commissioned a study by the Morgan Stanley investment banking firm on the organization's market value, hoping it would turn out to be several hundred million. Instead, the study characterized OTB as a "distressed entity" and said it should not be sold at all until it had been made healthy.

The standard response to those embracing this strategy is that (a) there is no reason to believe that OTB will ever have roses in its cheeks while the city runs it and (b) if by some miracle it did begin to look healthy, the pressure to privatize would instantly vanish.

Leading the turnaround effort is Allie Sherman, former head coach of the New York Giants, later a sports-marketing executive at Warner Communications, and now president and CEO of OTB. Sherman was brought in on the advice of OTB chairman David Cornstein, chairman of a privately held national jewelry store chain. (The OTB chairman presides at monthly board meetings but is not himself an executive of the corporation.) I spoke to both of them recently and came away with several impressions. One is that they believe they are under no particular time pressure from the state or city. Another is that they need a fair amount of time to create the kind of organization they envision. They are looking toward an OTB in which more and more customers can phone in bets and see races live on television. They also wish to promote viewing of live races at huge teletheaters. Clearly it will be years before this glitzy new OTB can possibly replace today's drab world of betting parlors. Meanwhile, one has a powerful sense that nothing is happening to shake up the OTB culture that has thwarted all past efforts at reform.

Over the years, the eternal obstacle to efficient management of the agency has been its high labor costs, dependably around 75 percent of total costs. For openers, OTB has a lot of managers. A study done in 1992 by the City Council's Finance Committee noted an incredible manager-to-employee ratio of 1 to 3, compared with typical private-sector ratios of 1 to 7.

A casual newspaper reader of countless stories over the years about OTB downsizing and betting-parlor closings could be forgiven for thinking that labor costs must finally be under control. But it never happens. OTB employees belong to a powerful municipal union, District Council 37, which has a tough, tough contract. OTB employees work five days a week, yet if one of those days falls on a weekend, they collect time-and-a-half pay for working Saturday and double time for Sunday. Last winter, with OTB losing money and closing down still more betting parlors, the union did not budge on these arrangements, so recently management has simply been closing 30 parlors on Sundays. Because OTB employees (like all city employees) are hard to fire, substantial buyouts generally accompany downsizing. Virtually all OTB workers are members of the New York City Employees' Retirement System, and the agency last year paid $6.8 million for pension and post-employment health benefits—about $5,000 per current employee. Altogether, OTB's personnel costs totaled around $70 million, a shade over $50,000 per head. That figure has increased sixfold since OTB's beginnings, while the consumer price index rose about fourfold. It is reasonable to suppose that Giuliani's team will work harder than its predecessors to extract concessions from OTB's labor leaders, but it plainly has a way to go.

OTB is sensitive about its labor costs, since so many critics keep noting that the agency, established mainly as a vehicle for steering millions to New York City, steers so much more to its own employees. A somewhat hilarious gauge of the sensitivity about labor costs appears in OTB's annual reports, which feature double-page bar charts breaking down the handle's disposition during each of the past ten years: so much was returned to bettors, so much went to NYRA, to the city, to personnel costs, and so on.

Now here is the hilarious part. When I looked at the bars in the latest annual report—for the year ending June 1993, since OTB is not too swift at getting out reports—I was struck by an impression that the critics must be wrong: the purple segment showing payments to New York City was at least as long as the yellow segment for personnel. A ruler confirmed this impression: the segment for the city was 2 centimeters, personnel only 1.8. It was only when I looked at the accompanying figures that I realized that the lengths of the two segments did not correspond to the amounts they were representing. Personnel that year accounted for $70.4 million, while contributions to the city, despite those extra millimeters, were $31.9 million. Or don't you think that's funny?

Another tale from the front lines. It is January 2, 1988, around noon. I am home betting the card at Aqueduct—that is, making some kind of bet on all nine races. The OTB telephone operator takes my account number and password, mentions the opening balance in my account, accepts all my bets, and tells me the total amount I have wagered and the closing balance in the account. I hang up and prepare to rush off, planning to watch the races that evening on cable TV's nightly screening of all the day's races.

Just as I am leaving the apartment, I have a sudden queasy feeling about the final figures passed along by the OTB operator. The closing balance, the only figure I remember clearly, is $40 higher than I would have expected. Maybe this means merely that I was confused about my opening balance, but maybe—ominous thought—it means that some of my bets were not properly entered into the OTB computer. I call OTB back and talk to another operator, who patiently calls up my bets on his screen. Everything seems in order until we get to the ninth race.

My standard purchase in the ninth race is four $2 triple boxes. A triple is a bet where you try to identify the first three horses to cross the finish line, in order. This is undoable via any known logical process, so most bettors, including me, buy triple "boxes," in which you are covered for all six combinations of the three horses to win, place, and show. A $2 box therefore costs $12. What finally emerges in my review of the bets is that the first OTB operator had absentmindedly put me down for four $2 ordinary triple bets instead of four $2 boxes, so I had paid $8 instead of $48. I tell the second OTB operator to take the additional $40 out of my account and reenter the bets as boxes. This turns out to be my best decision of the day, since the bets originally entered got no place, but one of my boxes turns out to pay $14,166; the three top horses went off at 21 to 1, 72 to 1, and 12 to 1.

As Giuliani repeatedly stated during his 1993 campaign, and as his press spokesmen still agree when asked, New York City does not belong in the off-track betting business. It should announce plans to get out soon and put OTB up for bids by private operators. Any such auction would require permission from Albany, but it is hard to see the state resisting the city on bookmaker privatization, which even Mario Cuomo has endorsed.

In past discussions of possible OTB acquirers, two names have frequently surfaced: NYRA and Ladbroke, the British bookmaking firm, which is trying to establish a presence in the United States (it operates tracks in several states and runs an off-track betting operation in connection with one of them, outside Pittsburgh). In 1991, NYRA asked for the right to take over off-track betting and offered $43 million. The state and city rejected the proposition, but NYRA would surely be among the bidders in any serious privatization process. It already competes with OTB in offering telephone betting.

Though Giuliani briefly toyed with the idea of asking NYRA alone to make a bid, it is hard to see why NYRA or anyone else should have an inside track in bidding for OTB. Indeed, there is no good reason for privatization to result in only one private operator. OTB has many different kinds of customers, and surely something on the British model—where betting shops have different and competing owners, with different strategies for attracting customers—would also work in New York City. The privatized betting operators would presumably be regulated by the state, as legal gambling is everywhere, and would presumably pay their share of state and city income taxes.

Nobody today can gauge the extent to which privatized off-track betting would grow and flourish. Some analysts—including the New York State Senate Advisory Commission on Privatization (the Lauder Commission)—think it probably would generate increased revenues for the state and the city.

Here, however, we come to a depressing detail—or at least one that has to be rated bad news by any OTB customers following the privatization argument. The news is that everybody involved in the argument, the Lauder Commission included, takes it for granted that a privatized OTB would retain the basic mission of the existing organization: it would still be designed to maximize government revenues and extract every possible nickel out of the horseplayers. It would presumably be much more user-friendly than the existing OTB; however, the surcharge would remain in place, as a major conduit steering money from players' pockets to city coffers. The budget released by Giuliani's team in February shows OTB to be increasingly profitable in the late nineties, when it is presumably privatized. The residual deficit is gone, replaced by residual income projected to be $8.7 million in 1999. But the surcharge that year—still part of the deal—is put at $25.6 million.

It is easy to understand why the city would not wish to give up a cash cow like the surcharge. Still, it seems surprising that nobody is focusing on another aspect of the case: an OTB that maximizes city income and hits its customers with an odious tax is an OTB that will fetch far less in the open market, because the surcharge drives away potential customers. John Long, who heads Ladbroke's American operations, has said firmly and repeatedly that he would not be interested in bidding on OTB in its present form; he specifically mentions the surcharge when asked why the existing organization looks so unappealing.

So the city might do as well or better selling off OTB to operators unencumbered by the surcharge. OTB's customers would certainly do better in this scenario—in a world where privatization meant not just more efficient operation but paying the whole $12 on a 5-to-1 bet. Possibly the time has come to enter the customers' well-being into the equation. If that sounds like consumer advocacy, so be it. ●

Where's the Power in the Empowerment Zone?

Mitchell L. Moss

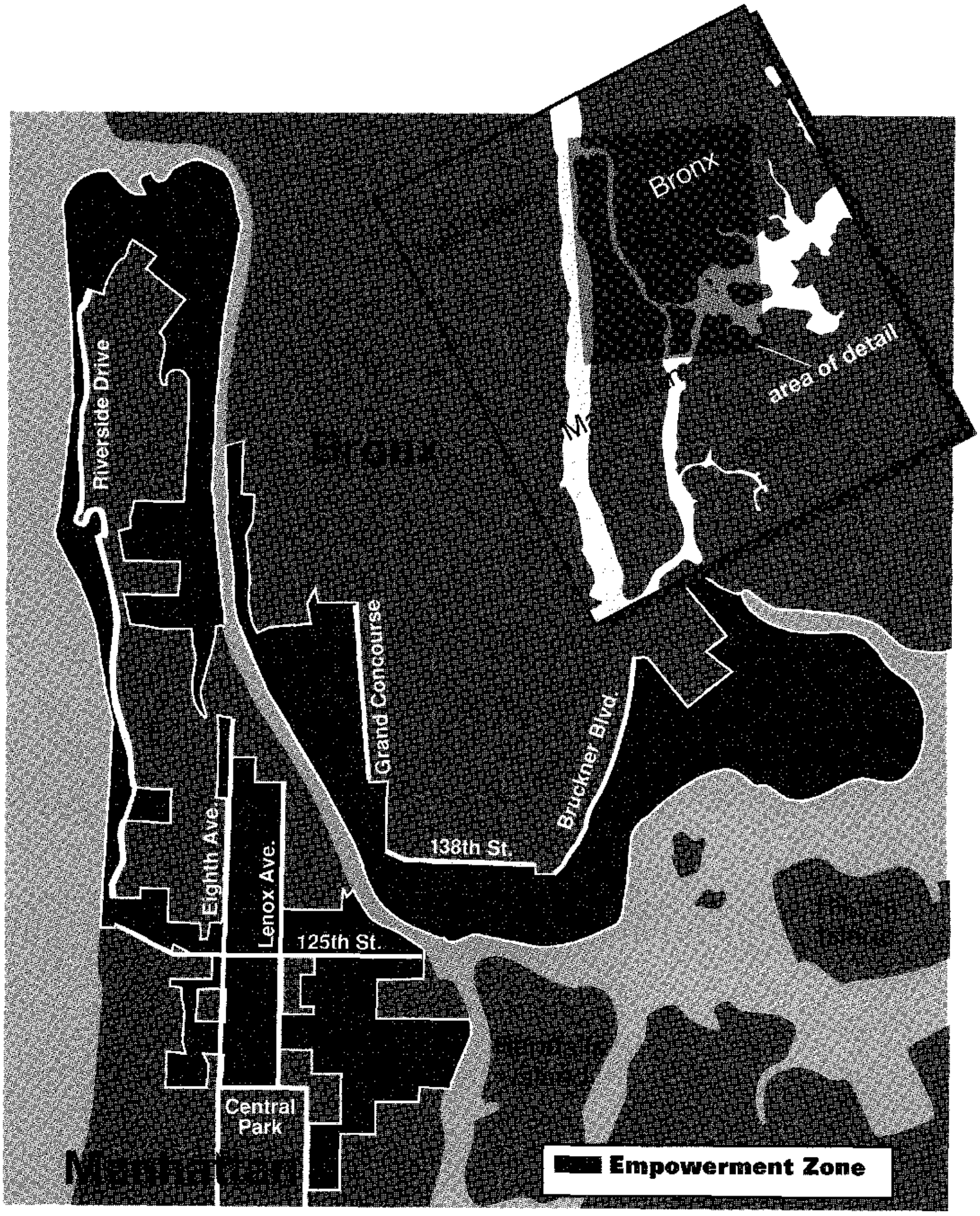
Forget the hoopla. New York's version of this federal prescription for ailing cities is a bust.

The centerpiece of the Clinton administration's urban policy—the empowerment zone program—is about to self-destruct in New York City. The New York zone, made up of parts of Harlem and the South Bronx, has been the subject of enormous hyperbole in the press and intense political wrangling within the black and Latino communities. For it to succeed in sparking an economic renaissance, the program would have to focus on encouraging private-sector job creation. Instead, current plans for the zone look like an enormous safety net for social services, not a launching pad for renewing the economic base of these low-income neighborhoods.

More than a decade ago, British geographer Peter Hall proposed to stimulate investment in England's decaying inner cities by eliminating regulations and taxes in designated "enterprise zones." Since the British government's many efforts to rejuvenate run-down urban areas had failed, Hall suggested a modest experiment with "non-planning"—the absence of government constraints on capital, immigration, and labor in a handful of zones "thrown open to all kinds of initiative, with minimal control."

The enterprise zone concept was brought into the U.S. policy arena by two former New York congressmen, Jack Kemp and Robert Garcia, long before there was any proof that such zones might be effective tools for urban economic development. The idea itself generated considerable support among conservatives, since it was based on the free-market principles of private investment, reduced regulation, and no large-scale public spending.

Opponents of the enterprise zone did not believe that waiving the minimum wage, environmental regulations, and taxes would attract jobs, even though similar techniques had worked in Hong Kong and Puerto Rico. Inner-city neighborhoods, they reasonably argued, had too many problems to make them attractive to private business, and, moreover, the residents of those communities, suffering from social problems no amount of economic development could cure, wouldn't take any jobs that might be created in their backyards and so wouldn't benefit. (See "Why Enterprise Zones Will Not Work," *City Journal*, Autumn 1993.) The concept, however, was kept alive by state governments, which developed their own version of enterprise zones. New York State, for example, has designated approximately 40 "economic opportunity


Riverside Drive
Bronx
Bronx
area of detail
Grand Concourse
Bruckner Blvd
138th St.
Eighth Ave.
Lenox Ave.
125th St.
Central Park
Manhattan
■ Empowerment Zone

Complex forces shaped the complex outline of the empowerment zone.

zones" in cities, rural areas, and older suburban communities across the state. They have been given a total of only $2 million, though, and have had few results worth mentioning.

During the 1980s, liberals latched onto the enterprise zone concept. They discovered that it offered a way to channel money into impoverished urban communities, subverting the rationale for the enterprise zone by expanding, rather than reducing, government involvement. With both liberal and conservative support, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 included a modest enterprise zone pro-

Map by Maria Lewis

gram, but it offered no financial incentives to investors and entrepreneurs, just waivers from HUD regulations and preferential treatment for HUD funding for 100 communities. Not surprisingly, Jack Kemp, President Bush's secretary of housing and urban development, refused to designate any zones until Congress expanded the program to include financial incentives, which—until now—it never had. In response to the Los Angeles riots of 1992, there was a burst of public support for federal assistance to cities, and during the summer of 1992 proposals for enterprise zone legislation surfaced in Congress once again, among Republicans and Democrats alike. But it was not until both the White House and the Congress were in Democratic hands that the concept of the enterprise zone—albeit modified and renamed by the new Democratic administration as an empowerment zone—was brought to life as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.

Congressman Charles Rangel of Harlem, then the third-ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee, was largely responsible for inserting the empowerment zone proposal into the 1993 act, which combined tax hikes for the rich with tax credits for the working poor. Before that, President Clinton had given up on any large-scale public investment program, after failing to pass an economic stimulus package that would have channeled federal money into communities across the country. But Rangel pushed hard to authorize tax credits and funds for empowerment zones in the budget reconciliation act, which was subject to a single up-or-down congressional vote. Once the money was authorized, it took the joint efforts of New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley and Congressman Rangel actually to appropriate funds for the empowerment zone program in the appropriation bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education for fiscal year 1995.

Although Congress assigned responsibility for formulating the guidelines and administering the empowerment zone program to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, it appropriated the funds for the zones under Title XX of the Social Security Act, which provides block grants to the states for social services. This legislative maneuver created the built-in bias toward spending for an array of social services that marks the entire empowerment zone program, despite the best efforts of the Clinton administration staffers and HUD to design guidelines that would allow federal funds to be spent on economic development activities.

Thanks largely to Rangel, the empowerment zone has emerged as the only initiative by the Clinton administration with an explicitly urban focus. Of course, the geographic diversity within Congress made it difficult to confine empowerment zones to cities alone. The final legislation included funds for 6 urban empowerment zones, 3 rural ones, 65 urban and 35 rural enterprise communities, and aid for Indian reservations.

Each empowerment zone would get $100 million over two years, and each enterprise community would get a grant of $2.95 million to promote economic self-sufficiency through adult education and training, welfare-to-work transition programs, workplace day care, and job placement. Businesses in the zones would get a 20 percent tax credit for the first $15,000 of wages and training expenses paid to employees who live or perform most of their work in the zones. In addition, small businesses in the zones are allowed to deduct an additional $20,000 per year for depreciable equipment, beyond the $17,500 already permitted. Although the empowerment zone program provided incentives for private investment, it also gave the Clinton administration a new framework for social service spending, not just on job training or welfare-to-work programs but also, under Title XX of the Social Security Act, on emergency and transitional homeless shelters or drug- and alcohol-abuse programs in big cities.

After a national competition that attracted hundreds of applicants, New York was awarded an empowerment zone by President Clinton in December 1994, an outcome that many felt was preordained given Congressman Rangel's strategic role in pushing the empowerment zone into law. The other cities to be awarded zones were Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Although Cleveland and Los Angeles did not get empowerment zones, HUD—in a rare display of bureaucratic creativity—invented a consolation prize for those cities, the "supplemental empowerment zone," consisting of block grants without the tax credits.

The federal empowerment zone legislation stipulated that zones in cities with a population in excess of 500,000 could not have more than 200,000 people or exceed 20 square miles. Consequently, for New York City—with more than 7.5 million people—around 2.5 percent of the city's total population could benefit from an empowerment zone. Naturally, the determination of the zone's boundaries became a highly politicized matter, since inclusion in the zone would make it possible to obtain not just federal but also state and local funds, as well as tax incentives to attract private investment.

Soon after the 1993 election, outgoing Mayor David Dinkins designated Harlem the city's empowerment zone. After Rudy Giuliani took office in January 1994, leaders from the South Bronx and Williamsburg, Brooklyn, sought to have their communities included in the zone too—a reasonable idea, since these neighborhoods already have some industrial activity to build on, as Harlem does not. In the spring of 1994, Giuliani, eager to keep the Yankees in the Bronx, modified the zone to include parts of the borough, thus making it possible for New York City and New York State to treat any public investment in Yankee Stadium or the surrounding neighborhood as a contribution to the empowerment zone's matching requirements. Apart from the Yankee Stadium area, the Bronx portion included extensive amounts of industrial land at the Hunt's Point market, Port Morris, and the Harlem Rail Yards.

Who would have control over the boundaries of the zone and the formulation of the activities that would go on within them? Needless to say, this was a hotly contentious question. Two local development corporations came forward with proposals. First was the Harlem Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), with which Rangel has long been associated. Established in 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King, HUDC, a subsidiary of the New York State Urban Development Corporation, had no proven track record in economic development but was the politically obvious choice to control the first major federal program designated for Harlem in almost 25 years. To prepare Harlem's empowerment zone proposal, HUDC hired faculty from Columbia University and CUNY as consultants, with funds furnished by the Ford Foundation and the State of New York.

At the same time, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC), a nonprofit local economic development corporation that had been actively involved in efforts to stimulate private and public investment in the Bronx, formulated its own separate proposal, operating on a shoestring. The Bronx proposal was subsequently incorporated into a single document submitted by New York City and State to HUD, but Congressman Rangel was able to keep the Bronx portion of the zone to a mere 33,592 Bronx residents, or 16.8 percent of the total empowerment zone population. Moreover, two Bronx redevelopment proposals, Melrose Commons and Bronx Center, were omitted from the Bronx portion of the zone, despite the fact that they had emerged from two years of community planning efforts.

A built-in bias toward spending for an array of social services marks the entire empowerment zone program.

Drawing the boundaries for the Harlem portion of the zone was so disputed among various groups of Harlem residents that the final determination was not made until just before the proposal was submitted to the federal government. As a result, the text of the proposal does not clearly identify the actual boundaries of the zone itself. The zone starts at the north in Washington Heights, in order to include the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center located at Broadway and 168th Street, where a state-subsidized biotech incubator already being built on the site of the Audubon Ballroom will now be eligible for empowerment zone funds. The zone runs down a narrow sliver of land along the Hudson River to central Harlem, where it widens and then runs across 125th Street to East Harlem, taking in both black and Hispanic low-income residential areas, as well as the Latino marketplace (*La Marqueta*) and the abandoned Washburn Wire Factory building on the East River.

When the federal funds expire, there will be no long-term improvement in the area's capacity to generate jobs or attract private investment.

Federal guidelines required extensive community involvement in developing a city's empowerment zone proposal, and the Harlem Urban Development Corporation assembled an array of task forces to identify local needs and priorities. Efforts to involve the private sector in committing resources to the zone proposal were not successful, since HUDC focused on persuading the private sector to contribute money to their projects rather than actually to create jobs in Harlem. HUDC did succeed in getting both Mount Sinai and Columbia-Presbyterian, two world-class medical centers located in Harlem and Washington Heights respectively, to participate in developing plans for the zone. Both nonprofit institutions are major sources of jobs as well as essential health-care providers to the population in upper Manhattan. But it's difficult to imagine a significant gain in health-care jobs, given the anticipated cuts in Medicaid and private-sector measures to control health costs.

The Harlem portion of the plan is a remarkable mix of programs to serve local needs for day care, education, social services, and health care, combined with a few large-scale physical development projects, like a new CUNY community college at the Washburn Wire Factory, that will not create private-sector jobs or attract private investment. For example, the proposal envisions a computerized drug referral system, security improvements in public housing, child-care program upgrades, "family preservation, development, and intergenerational programs," a community health center, and a cadre of community empowerment zone organizers to assist residents in gaining access to empowerment zone—and other government—programs. The proposal also envisions a "Medicaid Entitlement Zone" that seeks to make every resident of the zone eligible for Medicaid. The proposal earmarks 23 percent of the federal empowerment zone funds for children and youth programs, 12 percent for health and substance-abuse programs, 6 percent for other social services, and 17 percent for local administration of the program—58 percent of the total.

The biggest capital project explicitly designed to spark private economic development isn't likely to succeed in doing so. Long a pet project of Congressman Rangel's, it is the Harlem International Trade Center, a high-rise building designed to house the trade offices of Third World countries. The problem with this plan is that most nations prefer to locate their trade offices near the city's banking, finance, and business center, and Third World nations are no exception. Nevertheless, New York State has already allocated $48 million in funds from the Port Authority's Regional Development Fund for the project, money that now sits in an escrow account whose interest supplies some of the operating funds for the Harlem Urban Development Corporation.

In a less ambitious but eminently sensible effort, by contrast, the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem's most successful development agency, is slated to administer a revolving capital loan fund for small businesses. New York City intends to put $31 million into the capital fund, which can then be used to leverage approximately $300 million in Small Business Administration loans.

Unlike Harlem's plan, the Bronx proposal paid more attention to economic revitalization than social services, but the plan has had very little of the empowerment zone resources allocated to it. The proposal builds upon economic development initiatives already under way, such as a plan to establish the Bronx Community Paper Company, a joint venture between a private company and Banana Kelly, a local nonprofit corporation, that would create 150 to 250 jobs.

SOBRO, the South Bronx Development Corporation, intends to develop the Harlem River Yards—large tracts of industrial land—by taking advantage of their access to the interstate highway system and rail lines and their proximity to the 4.8 million people who live in Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Tax incentives and infrastructure improvements could well encourage warehousing and distribution, "big-box" discount stores, and even manufacturing ventures in the South Bronx portion of the zone.

Ten years from now, when the empowerment zone program is history, it will be considered either just another flawed federal program that supported social service programs or the catalyst for the revitalization of Harlem and the South Bronx. Decisions made now will determine whether New York's empowerment zone fulfills the original purposes of the enterprise zone or is subverted by traditional poverty politics.

Almost no one in the press or in public office has been willing to question the logic of New York's empowerment zone plan. It went unchallenged when Vice President Al Gore and other Democratic politicians gathered with empowerment zone leaders from around the country at a Columbia University conference in March. The conference resembled a pep rally for Rangel and the empowerment zone. Little wonder: many of those in attendance were from nonprofit organizations that stand to benefit handsomely from the infusion of federal funds.

However, unless the empowerment zone is treated as more than just old-fashioned political pork, it is not likely to do more than bring a burst of federal dollars into two low-income communities and perpetuate their dependence on a shrinking public sector. For New York's empowerment zone to serve economic development objectives, investments are needed to reduce—not reinforce—the area's reliance on public programs. The investments should encourage small businesses, retail activity, and wealth-creating activities like the reuse of vacant land within Harlem and the South Bronx. They should capitalize on Harlem's incalculable geographic advantages of close proximity, and strong highway and mass transit links, to midtown Manhattan, with all its economic might. For the Harlem Urban Development Corporation, community economic development is just another term for strengthening the local social welfare infrastructure. But when the federal funds expire, there will be no long-term improvement in the community's capacity to generate jobs or attract private investment. Worse, if no new jobs are created in Harlem, the tax credits—a valuable federal incentive—cannot be used. Without tax credits, the lasting benefit to the city of the empowerment zone is seriously diminished.

Some argue that the empowerment zone as defined by the Clinton administration is just another anti-poverty program that will do little to change the downward trajectory of impoverished inner-city communities. Others believe that the logic underlying the enterprise zone is flawed: fewer regulations and lower taxes are not enough to overcome the crime, low work skills, and lack of capital in low-income urban communities. Whatever the case, there is still no reason not to make the best use of the potential tax credits and federal dollars that New York City will receive through the empowerment zone program, by emphasizing job creation by the private rather than the nonprofit sector. Unless steps are taken soon to revise the New York City empowerment zone plan, the Clinton Administration's principal initiative in New York City won't make a nickel's worth of lasting difference. ●

Urbanities

Dynamite, Manhattan, 1939

David Gelernter

In the summer of 1939, *Life* magazine ran a "Portrait of America": a cheerful, stylized map in red and gray, spread across two pages. As we contemplate late-thirties America, it comes to resemble our own country less and less. The differences that count most are not the ones we notice first. They are not the ones on which most history books dwell. Those obvious differences are real and worth knowing about, but there is more to this story.

Let's flip briefly to the "Portrait." We see the 48 states festooned with cities and factories, roadways and farms, and forests and fields. The country depicted is obviously not ours. It's easy to make out New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, but there is no city of any size in Texas or anywhere else in the South. Smoke-belching factories are rendered exuberantly. Long-distance passenger trains ply the heartlands; ocean liners converge on New York City; New England is represented by a textile mill, a church, a farm, and a lighthouse.

Other differences are more subtle but right there for the reading. The city of Washington, rendered iconically as a slice of the Capitol building, is dwarfed by Detroit. Hollywood is a high-kicking chorus line, plus spotlights, camera, and director's chair. The movie business was important but not to be taken too seriously; the idea of a screen actress trailing issues advisors and making political pronouncements would have seemed absurd. The totem poles in the Northwest, "darkies" in the cotton fields, and cowboys whooping it up on the range all hint at 1939's patronizing, anthropologizing interest in what we would call "diversity."

STORED HERE
DANGER

ALEXANDER ALLAND, *PORTRAIT OF NEW YORK*, © 1939 BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

An unprotected cache of dynamite in midtown New York.

Our workforce is integrated to a degree that 1939 could barely have imagined. We have made huge gains in putting the talents of our population to use. On the other hand, progressive 1939 opinion would have found our idea of cultural diversity, especially in up-to-date university style—the proposition that there is a black culture that should be taught and studied by blacks, a woman's culture to be taught and studied by women—at least reactionary and more likely demented.

All these differences come clear to varying degrees in the map. They are real differences, but ultimately they are not the point. We are separated from the world of 1939 by a phenomenon far deeper than any of these.

Question: What is wrong with this picture? It appeared in a 1939 survey of New York City—a construction site with pedestrians walking past in front, leafy trees and apartment buildings to the rear. Painted on a fence around part of the work site are the words DYNAMITE STORED HERE—DANGER EXPLOSIVES DANGER. It is a tall, solid board fence. But there is no barbed wire, no policeman. "Women and children trip by fenced-off magazine of high explosives," the caption reads. What on earth made 1939ers believe—correctly, it seems—that they could trust their fellow citizens to the extent of leaving an unprotected cache of dynamite in the heart of New York City?

Here is one aspect of the answer to this question and the deeper one about 1939's fundamental differences from today. Nineteen thirty-nine lived in an "ought" culture. We inhabit more of a "want" culture, a desire-not-obligation culture. One of the most obvious and important consequences of the slow death between 1939 and today of American civic religion—the coherent, deeply held set of shared beliefs and ideas that bound Americans into one community—is the sweeping aside of its oughts.

The ought culture made itself felt in many ways. For example: 1939's daily experience was assembled to a far greater extent than ours out of countless small rituals—pieces of formulaic behavior that you enacted not because you feel like it, necessarily, but because it was expected of you. Because it is the proper thing, and you ought to do it.

A middle-class dinner or even breakfast of the 1930s might involve an entire family seated at table with the males in ties and the maid scurrying about. The ritual of each child's planting a breakfast kiss on seated mamma's cheek was sufficiently well known to have been included in movie scenes not evidently intended to be farcical. Hats have rules: a gentleman of course removes his when speaking to a lady on the street, removes it when a lady enters an elevator (unless the elevator is inside an office building or a store); replaces it when he steps off into the corridor. He lifts his hat as a gesture of politeness to strangers and lifts it more emphatically when he performs an outdoor informal (versus an indoor ceremonial) bow.

Nineteen thirty-nine's polite conversation is scripted and therefore ritualized to a much greater extent than ours is. "Under all possible circumstances, the reply to an introduction is 'How do you do?'" ("The taboo of taboos is 'Pleased to meet you.'") When the need arises, one says "I beg your pardon"—never, *ever*, "Pardon me," which is a barbarism. It goes without saying that first names are to be used only under the proper, restricted circumstances (never among strangers), and that "sir," "madam," or "miss" is an appropriate form of address.

The rituals governing a gentleman's behavior toward ladies are the best developed of all. A gentleman in a private home stands as long as any lady is on her feet. A gentleman is always introduced or presented to a lady, never the other way round, even if "he is an old gentleman of great distinction and the lady a mere slip of a girl."

I do not want to convey the impression that my principal source for these intelligences, Emily Post's 1937 *Etiquette*, is a prissy book. Not at all. It is breezy, amusing, and wry (wry being a favorite thirties flavor). Nonetheless, rules are rules.

All this etiquette hardly made late-thirties New York a flawlessly civilized place. During his thirties building campaign, Robert Moses installed playgrounds around the edges of Central Park. At first they were charming, with the standard swings and slides, but also sandboxes, crawling tunnels, and striped, turreted "guardhouses." They were fenced only with hedges. But dogs spoiled

AMERICAN EXPRESS
TRAVEL SERVICE
TRAVELERS CHEQUES

An effortless way to tour the 1939 New York World's Fair.

the sandboxes, drunks slept in the tunnels, perverts spied from the guardhouses, and in the end the playgrounds lost all their special toys and were barricaded with lockable chain-link fences. It is a story worth remembering when nostalgia threatens to get out of hand. In preparation for the World's Fair and the mass of tourists it would draw, New York City's police, cabdrivers, and subway workers got special courses in politeness—suggesting that proper behavior was valued but hardly to be taken for granted.

Manners didn't matter only to the rich, though. Visiting New York from London in 1938, Cecil Beaton notes that "the general rules of behavior are rigidly adhered to, and Mrs. Post's book on etiquette is as strictly interpreted in Gotham as the Koran in Mecca. Competitions are held whereat children from all parts of New York vie with each other to become the politest child in Manhattan, and demonstrate their courtesy before judges." On one occasion, the winner was a 13-year-old girl from the Lower East Side.

Courtesy wasn't only decorative, either. It was a terse and pregnant form of communication. A small gesture might speak volumes. At a Lower East Side relief station, Mayor La Guardia dropped in unannounced. He was enraged by the lackadaisical bureaucrats he found. A supervisor wandered over to see what the fuss was, and mistook the visitor for another out-of-work troublemaker. The mayor knocked the hat off his head: *"Take off your hat when you speak to a citizen."* After supervising an on-the-spot reorganization, the mayor

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

stomped off; on his way out, he pointed to the man with the knocked-off hat, declaring: "There's another S. of a B. who has no job."

Many of the official rules would have been of utterly no concern to the typical member of an industrial union (let's say). But the general concepts would indeed have been, from hat (or cap) management through a certain sort of courtesy—now largely though not wholly obsolete—to ladies and older people. Once again the movies are helpful. When Charlie Chaplin's factory worker in *Modern Times* (1936) leaps to his feet in a paddy wagon to offer his place to Paulette Goddard, when Danny Kaye's milkman in *The Kid from Brooklyn* (1946) pops off the sofa like a jack-in-the-box when he notices that Eve Arden is standing, they aim to seem innocent and lovable and even childlike, but not ridiculous. A factory worker or milkman with impeccable manners—a working-class gentleman—is a premise that this era was willing to live with. Even a low-life gambler like Fred Astaire's companion Victor Moore in *Swing Time* (1936) can't help himself: he rises from his seat at a nightclub, admittedly for only the merest fraction of a second, when Ginger Rogers joins the party.

A. J. Liebling visited a block in Harlem. Birthrates in this "greatest Negro metropolis of the world" (as a newsreel calls it) are among the city's lowest, but the census lists this particular block as the most densely populated in the country. In some cases, half a dozen married couples share a single apartment and its one bathroom. And yet, says Liebling, "people maintain the forms of politeness." Standards are high.

At Robert Moses's wildly popular Jones Beach State Park, uniformed staff lower the flag to the strains of the National Anthem every evening, while "every bather, picnicker, stroller, game player, and onlooker within hearing," according to *American Home* magazine, "stands at attention facing toward the flag as it slowly descends into the arms of the color guard." No monopoly of the upper class, manners affected the character of everyday life everywhere.

The ought culture expressed itself also in clothing, which was more complicated and rule-bound than it is today. Ladies wear hats and gloves (and girdles). Men still wear detachable starched collars, though attached soft ones are becoming more acceptable. They wear hats, of course, waistcoats (not "vests"—standing with your fingers in the armholes is a standard part of the gesture vocabulary, conveying that you are down-home and folksy), and a broad spectrum of formal clothing. There are tails and white tie ("your stick should be of plain malacca . . ."), worn to formal events in the evening. Spats are still part of this outfit, although admittedly they are on the way out. For restaurants, informal dinners, informal parties, and the theater there is the dinner coat. ("Tuxedo" is a nickname that stylish people do not use.) You wear a cutaway and striped trousers to church (but only in the city) and to formal or ceremonial daytime events. And then there are variants like the frock coat, black sack coat, double-breasted dinner coat (the waistcoat may be omitted), white dinner coat, and silk house suit, each with its own special rules and occasions.

Virtually everyone in 1930s society is familiar with the different styles of formal dress. After all, the plot of *Swing Time*, the greatest of all Rogers-and-Astaire movies, hinges on the distinction between a cutaway and a dinner coat. Astaire would appear to the untrained eye to be dressed to the nines when he sweeps Ginger off her feet in the film's first dance scene. He is wearing spats, a waistcoat, and an outer coat that executes a deep tails-like swoop in the rear. But, of course, it is only a cutaway. He is sent off to fetch "dinner clothing" in preparation for a dance contest and gets in deep trouble with Ginger when he can't come up with a tuxedo. The rules of the ought culture are recognizable at once to any 1930s moviegoer.

Naturally, for a certain segment of the population, getting all dolled up in fancy, formal clothing would have been a pleasure and not a duty. But that segment can't have been too awfully large or we would never have abandoned the practice. We are more apt to shed duties than pleasures. And white tie, according to the 1992 Emily Post, "is almost never required today." Why bother? "For maybe ten years I have been devoted to the soft collar or sport model, the polo shirt, and other informal modes in collarings," Robert Benchley writes in 1927. "They have not been particularly adapted to playing up my good points in personal appearance, but they are easy to slip into in the morning." For Benchley and many others, formal styles were a pain. When you wore them, you wore them because you ought.

Once again, the formal range of the spectrum is of practical significance only to the upper and middle classes. Out at the World's Fair, on the other hand, almost every man on the grounds wears a tie. Nearly every woman wears a dress or a skirt. In 1940, as the *New York Times* reported, the World's Fair Corporation concocted a character to exemplify the "jolly, average, everyday American" in a nationwide advertising campaign. The idea was to boost attendance by making the fair's image homier. The character they settled on was a fiftyish man in a gray hat and suit, brown shoes, blue socks, white shirt, blue bow tie, and a small American flag in his lapel. The antithesis of top-hat clothing wasn't a sweatshirt. It was a bow tie and a gray suit. In 1939, after all, just under two-thirds of the population hold it to be indecent for a woman to appear on the street in shorts. A third hold that "topless bathing suits"—on men, of course—are indecent.

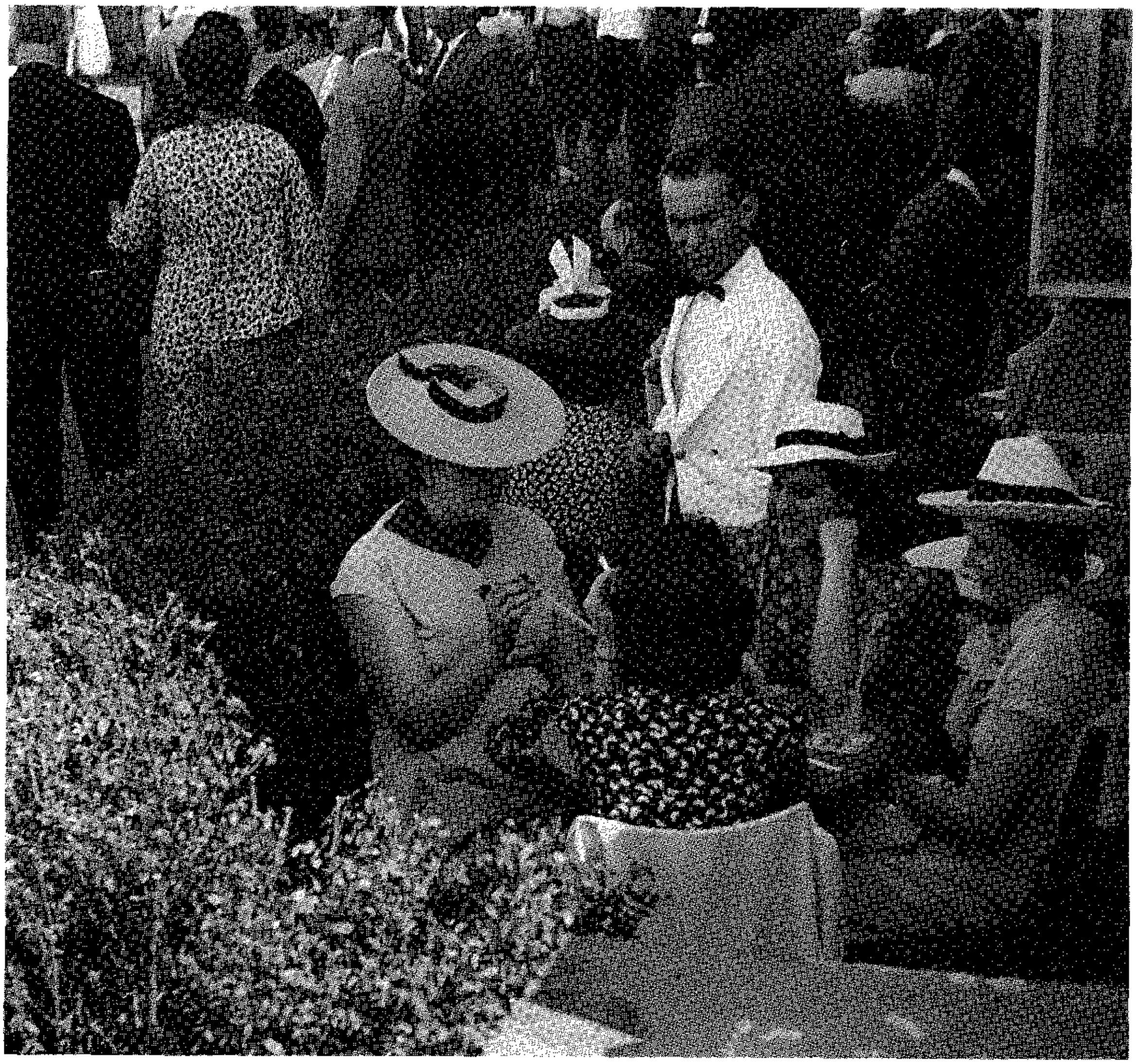
Etiquette is perennially attacked as an upper-class toy, not merely irrelevant to the rest of society but actively bad. During the class- and ideology-infatuated 1930s, it was bound to be vulnerable, particularly in Europe. ("Take off that collar and tie," a Frenchman tells George Orwell en route to Loyalist Spain during the civil war. "They'll tear them off you in Barcelona.") But, at least in the United States, etiquette was as likely to equalize classes as separate them. If the bank president had any manners, he removed his hat when the security guard's wife stepped into the elevator. And if the ranking bureaucrat had any manners, he removed his hat when addressing the unemployed laborer.

Thirties America is a country in which service is rendered and expected. You could stop at a tailor's and wait behind a curtain while your suit was pressed. On a train you maintained an ongoing relationship with the porter: he carried your luggage but also served you in transit—making up your bed and waking you in the morning, alerting you to interesting views up ahead, brushing off your clothes. Filling-station attendants washed your windows and checked the "oil, water, and battery." Perhaps workers were simply more servile than they are today. But it is also possible that they were, rather, more obliging. Doctors were not servile, but they made house calls. In a 1941 survey of people who happened to have colds, a quarter had consulted a doctor, and fully a third of those consultations entailed house calls. The filling-station man waited attentively on the busy doctor, but the doctor wasn't above visiting the sick filling-station man. Doing as you ought was not the only virtue and does not, all by itself, explain all those house calls or train porters. But it offers one clue to the logic of a society that seems, in certain ways, to have functioned more humanely than ours.

One last aspect of the ought society has to do with the power of those oughts to rally to your side if you were pressed against your wishes to do what society said you ought not to.

Sex between unmarried people was not exactly a novelty in the 1930s. When the unmarried hero of a 1940 novel takes the unmarried heroine for a Sunday outing, the heroine's thoughtful summing-up of the day's romantic activities is, "I think I was a bit sex-starved." It is easy to pile up similar examples. And yet there was obviously much less of it going around than there is today; as Philip Larkin declares in a famous poem (albeit an

Urbanities



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Alfresco refreshments at the World's Fair.

English, not American, one), "Sexual intercourse began / in nineteen sixty-three." The ought culture made sex more momentous when it happened, and, for the girl who didn't want to sleep with her boyfriend, the oughts stood ready to fly to her defense.

In late-thirties America, a contested divorce was hard to obtain almost everywhere. It had to be established that one spouse—not both, or the deal was off—was guilty of at least one official moral outrage, such as desertion, cruelty, or adultery. Yet an uncontested divorce was easy. You simply caught a train for Reno. (The divorce-bound, train-traveling narrator of a 1930s novel tries to decide how to answer her male fellow-passengers when they ask where she is going. "To say 'Reno' straight out would be vulgar; it would smack of confidences too cheaply given. . . .") If you were willing to grant your unhappy husband or wife an uncontested divorce, fine, but if you chose not to—the oughts would rally to your side.

Contraceptives were widely available, in pharmacies, gas-station rest rooms, and the Sears, Roebuck catalog, among other places. But the distribution of information about contraceptives was closely regulated by law, and guidance was not always easy to come by. Yes, you can get contraceptives, but no (1930s society seems to reason), we are under no obligation to make the process easy for young, unmarried people.

In the late thirties (as in many other periods), the practical possibilities were supposed to be tinted by oughts—in the sense that the tinting of a black-and-white photo can change the impression it makes without altering the bare facts. Certain colleges have been jeered for their silly attempts to impose official rules on the making of passes, to ensure that the woman is not taken advantage of. (As a logical next step, perhaps all attempted seductions should be refereed? And take place on regulation courts in the gym?) The proposed solution is absurd, yet the problem is not. Having spent decades methodically abolishing oughts because they constrain us, we are just noticing that we no longer have oughts to defend us, either.

Those oughts that covered big social issues like sex and divorce are important, but I myself am most interested in the little oughts that cropped up constantly in late-thirties daily life. I claim that the continual practice of proper behavior on an endless succession of trivial, meaningless occasions makes a person at least a bit more apt to act properly when the chips are down. I claim that all the little oughts late thirties society treasured are one cause of the huge divide in social character between that era and this. That tipping your hat, rising under the right circumstances (ladies rise too, for older ladies), not abusing first names, saying "How do you do?" when you are introduced—that all of this penny-ante stuff helps build a society in which dynamite can be cached unprotected in the middle of big cities. Obviously those little oughts cannot be the whole story, and obviously, too, we all know people who are slovenly of etiquette yet morally impeccable. Nonetheless, the ought culture as an integrated whole has a significance we tend to miss.

How can I prove my claim? It's true that "family values" and civility and other desirable social properties thrived in the thirties ought culture, and that they are on the rocks today, but perhaps that is a coincidence and there is no causal relation. My claim is a mere unprovable guess. But here are two far-afield pieces of information that help make it plausible.

Teddy Roosevelt makes a fascinating claim in his autobiography: he says that courage can be acquired "by sheer dint of practicing fearlessness." We often think of courage as a quality you are born with. But in T.R.'s view (and it is a view that commands respect: he was a brave man), it is more of a skill, like wok cookery. In this particular case, proper behavior is held to require not merely thorough and correct instruction but dogged practice.

My other datum comes from Judaism. Traditional Judaism is the ought culture par excellence, full of rigorously detailed injunctions to be carried out scrupulously despite their lack of any inherent moral significance. Don't eat pork; do spend a week having your meals in a jerry-built hut outdoors. (The attempt to assign rational bases to the rules diminishes them: if you observe them because they are sensible, you cannot do so because they are sacred.) Proper behavior is held, again, to depend not only on knowledge but on constant practice. "Studying is not the essential thing, rather practice," according to a much-loved book of the Talmud. Acquiring the habit of doing as you ought is the main thing.

Across the political spectrum we hear nowadays about family values and civility. But civility in the lost, late-thirties sense was one effect of the ought culture: it didn't exist in a vacuum. People were motivated to observe the oughts not by the desire to be nice but to avoid making fools of themselves. It was entirely selfish. Human nature being what it is, the exhortation "If you do this, people will think you're polite" is just not as effective as "If you do this, people won't think you are a low-life boor."

We have newly minted oughts of our own, of course. But we have destroyed more oughts than we have created, and today's oughts are mainly negative. Don't smoke; don't drink too much. (Thirties sophisticates were constantly getting tight, which for some reason did not count as acting like a low-life boor.) Don't flirt or say anything that might be construed as offensive by a theoretical construct representing the most sanctimonious, ignorant, and litigious member of any officially protected group. Because our own vestigial ought culture is built on a sort of second half of the Ten Commandments without the first, we aren't left with many occasions for doing what is proper as opposed to avoiding what is not.

Today's approach to the whole issue is captured perfectly in a recent *New York Times* front-page story. "They sweat into their summer suits," a reporter writes of New Yorkers at business in the summer, "and walk inside unbending shoes, ignoring comfort and common sense because convention, and their employers, expect them to dress up at work." The fools. In our modern view, a series of 1939 tableaux on (let us say) a fine spring day—the gentleman buttoning his waistcoat and choosing a hat, the lady pulling on gloves, the day-laborer who tips his cap to a priest or removes it after stopping still when the flag happens to pass by, the businessman arriving home hot and tired who nonetheless presides over the family dinner with his tie still lashed to his neck—these are so many petty, pointless crimes against common sense.

If you were a 1930s man, woman, or child, Henry Ford or a resident of the tightest-packed block in Harlem, society's ought was an all-day, everyday hand on your shoulder. It checked your freedom and cramped your style. You would have been more comfortable without it. But in the end, like the man's stiff collar and tie or the woman's girdle, it was something you got used to; it was tolerable; it was even, maybe, not as bad as it looked. We rebel in our very souls nowadays against the idea that conventional behavior, dress, and manners could possibly matter. We abolished all those rules with the best of intentions. But there is no getting around the fact that in the 1930s, people simply got more practice in acting as they ought than we do. I can't say what all that dogged practice was worth when push came to shove. I do know that in 1939 you could leave a pile of dynamite unguarded in the middle of New York City.

●

Urbanities

Out-of-Step New York

David Brooks

It's a cliché that New York City is not America, but never before has New York been so out of step with the rest of the country. It's not only that in last November's election the city remained solidly Democratic while the country turned Republican. Beneath partisan labels, the vote signaled a more fundamental opposition. With candidates of both parties stampeding to ally themselves with rural virtue against urban vice, the election testified to the decisive ascendancy of suburban and exurban concerns and the fast-shrinking influence of urban voters. As for New Yorkers, as they gaped with stupefaction at the newly ascendant Republican Congress, it was clear that to them the America that had elected such legislators was as foreign as an alien planet.

It was not always so. For evidence, take a drive around New York—maybe up the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive, then all the way over to John F. Kennedy Airport, coming back to Rockefeller Center or over to Carnegie Hall. The names of these institutions remind one that, for most of American history, New York, whatever its peculiarities, was in step with the broader flow of American life. During the era of Democratic dominance between 1932 and 1980, New York could feel pleased to name public institutions after the leading politicians. In that liberal era, even the leading Republican faction, liberal Republicanism, had strong New York roots in Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller. But it is hard to imagine a Reagan Boulevard or a Gingrich Airport in New York, or even a Clinton Center.

While Republicans swept nearly every other region of the country last fall, Democrats carried 13 of New York City's 14 congressional seats. More than two-thirds of city voters opted for Mario Cuomo in his doomed reelection effort. But New Yorkers, and urbanites generally, compose an ever shrinking slice of the electorate. Even in New York State, the city represented only 29 percent of the total vote, down from 31 percent just 12 years ago.

Nationwide, the percentage of voters who are urbanites has been dropping since World War II. In 1966, to isolate the past 30 years, the nation's congressional districts were evenly divided between the urban, the rural, and the suburban. But today the number of primarily urban districts is down to 82, from 106 in 1966. Meanwhile, the number of suburban districts increased from 92 to 212.

Why is the rest of America so down on cities in general and New York City, the national metropolis, in particular? Why did so many candidates of both parties present themselves as such down-home, open-spaces types? Tennessee senatorial candidate Fred Thompson, for instance, leased a pickup truck that became the symbol of his campaign. And candidates of every stripe wore enough flannel shirts to supply an army of Kurt Cobain wannabes.

The answer is clear in a post-vote analysis by Dennis Farney of the *Wall Street Journal*. Traveling around the country, Farney found the most impressive divide was between what he called, in Robert Reich's phrase, the "glass tower people" and the rest of the population. The glass tower people are well educated, prospering, usually urban. Much of the rest of the nation deeply resents them. Farney emphasizes that this resentment is not just a revolt against Washington but is part of a broader cultural backlash against the knowledge class. "Politicians," he remarks, "are only the most visible symbols of this class—and one of the few members that ordinary people can reach out and topple. But the same gulf estranges Middle America from lobbyists and bankers, from consultants and artists, from journalists and academics—from a whole class that has come to dominate the nation's dialogue. It is unlikely

ARNOLD ROTH (3)

that this backlash is over—a point of glee to Republican conservatives."

Note that the resentment is not directed at education per se. It is not pure populism. The great victors of the election, men like Messrs. Gingrich, Gramm, and Armey, are well educated—Gingrich never lets you forget it. The object of the revolt was cosmopolitanism, the image of an urban elite, the elevator aristocracy.

America has long had an urban upper class, of course: the glass tower people of, say, the Time and Life Building were preceded by the masonry tower people of the Woolworth building. The mere existence of an urban elite doesn't necessarily generate the sort of anti-urban backlash we saw last November.

Many analysts have explored causes of the backlash. There are economic ones: the incomes of the glass tower people appear to rise and rise while those for the rest of the country stagnate. There are sociological ones: our credentialed society has gotten more efficient at segregating by intelligence, so the glass tower people today are more likely to have spent their entire lives with people like themselves—from elite college to grad school to law firm—than are the more self-made urban successes of yesterday.

But there is also a politico-cultural explanation, which may be the most important. As has been described many times, in the 1960s the adversarial attitude that had long characterized the bohemians and the beats took root in the sophisticated urban bourgeoisie, showing up in movies like *The Graduate*, with its ridicule of suburban life, and in Neil Young songs, such as "Southern Man," with its contempt for pickup-truck owners, Bible-quoters, and the rural and suburban lower middle class in general. It's no wonder so many people have described the riots of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago—upper-middle-class leftists fighting lower-middle-class white cops—as a quintessential event of the time.

A lot of what those kids were shouting has faded away with time, but their adversarial attitude has hardened into urban snobbery. Anybody with an ear picks up this snobbery constantly in New York City conversations: in ridicule for the "bridge and tunnel crowd," in the contemptuous use of the phrase "Middle America." The list of inferior citizens is long: suburban housewives, evangelicals, chamber-of-commerce officers, polyester wearers.

New Yorkers have always felt they were more sophisticated than the rest of the country. In the thirties or forties or fifties, an epidemic of what I call New York Disease raged all over town. This is the malady in which, if you tell a New Yorker something, he feels compelled to demonstrate that he already knew it. If it's a movie, he already saw it; if its a book, he read it in galleys. If God came down to the Number 3 train to declare the end of days, He'd get a car full of people telling Him they'd heard about it last week.

But the 1960s politicized the attitude, hardening it and taking it to an extreme. No longer were New Yorkers at the most sophisticated end of that continuum. Urban sophisticates came to measure themselves on a scale that ran directly counter to the American continuum. No longer ahead of the rest of the nation, they were now against it. And this adversarial attitude was demonstrated by people who did not consider themselves particularly political, in PBS productions, in glossy magazines, in music videos, in movies, on network TV, in Wall Street pontifications about restructuring the industrial heartland and the value of greed, and in "art" specializing in outraging the bourgeoisie—who inhabit the rest of America. By now these adversarial attitudes are so natural to New York life that they are to New Yorkers as water is to fish.

Ridicule the rubes often enough, and eventually they'll strike back. Suburbanites cannot counterattack culturally, but they have done so politically, in election after election. Not a single Republican lost a seat in the 1994 elections, because the GOP managed to project a body of beliefs and ideas that it takes seriously—and which are hostile to urban snobs. The post-industrial Conservative Opportunity Society Republicanism of Gingrich, Gramm, and Armey contains the same anti-urban sentiment as the Southern agrarianism of the 1930s, which looked to the values of a pre-industrial world. Both the pre-industrial and post-industrial visions disdain bigness, bureaucracy, and the centralization associated with industrialization. Both are hostile to cities. Both disdain the cosmopolitan literary and intellectual circles of New York and despise most of all the urban media.

Only their alternatives to urbanism are different. The Southern agrarians preferred the farmer in his unchanging small town. The Opportunity Society Republicans prefer the suburban entrepreneur hooked up to the Internet. The emphasis on cyberspace is crucial. In the Gingrichian world, cyberspace replaces urban space. Conversations are conducted over the modem instead of over dinner at a metropolitan restaurant or club.

Unlike the neo-conservatives, America's older conservative movement, of which the new congressional leaders are a part, cherishes the myth of the journey from the wilderness. The fifties and sixties were conservatism's wilderness years, with people like Milton Friedman, Russell Kirk,

Urbanities

Whittaker Chambers, Richard Weaver, William F. Buckley, and others raising their lonely voices. The quintessential image of conservative development is a lonely young man or woman in a small Indiana or Arizona or Georgia town reading Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* or the writings Russell Kirk composed from his own small Michigan town. The movement has since stormed the citadels of power, but the central idea of wisdom emanating from the good common sense of the provincials in the heartland and ultimately triumphing over urban elites remains a dominant part of the conservative ethos.

The metropolitan ideal is very different. It has lost so much self-confidence in recent years that we can scarcely remember it now. But the men and women who founded many of New York's cultural institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had it firmly in their minds. Their idea was that concentrating cultural, intellectual, and commercial leadership in one place would make each branch more powerful. "The conjunction of the forces of rank, wealth, knowledge, intellect . . . makes such a city a sort of foundry," wrote James Bryce, who in 1888 edited an important book, *The American Commonwealth* (which included a chapter by former Brooklyn and future New York City Mayor Seth Low). In a city, Bryce continued, "opinion is melted and cast." Then it "can be easily and swiftly propagated and diffused through the whole country." A contemporary offered another metaphor, that of galvanic batteries, which become more powerful as they are connected.

Thomas Bender, the historian, points out that intellectual life in New York has gone through several permutations, from the eighteenth-century civic culture of the city's literate businessmen and scientific amateurs, through nineteenth-century literary culture, to this century's academic culture of Columbia University and City College. Through these phases, New York came to dominate the American marketplace of ideas. Lionel Trilling, a quintessential New York intellectual, could write as late as the 1950s that the liberal imagination had a monopoly in political conversation in this country, and he could have added that New York possessed near-monopoly status as the nation's news, information, and idea center.

The liberal monopoly is long gone, and so is New York's monopoly. New York's product line of opinion making—ranging from little magazines and Susan Sontag–style writers at the high end down to glossy newsweeklies and New York–based television networks at the low end—is now under challenge from a different set of opinion-making institutions: think tanks in Washington and around the country, cable television networks, talk radio shows. The spokesmen of these new institutions declare their opposition to New York institutions; they rail against Manhattan snobbery; their style, not surprisingly, grates on urban sensibilities. In the November election, these new opinion institutions were on the winning side, with New York institutions allied with the losers.

Suburban and exurban resentment against cities is resentment against not only the urban glass-tower elites but also the urban underclass—a resentment based on the belief that the underclass lives off the work of the rest of the country.

Again, compare the Southern agrarians of the 1930s with the Conservative Opportunity Society Republicans of the 1990s, this time for the contrast rather than the similarity. The agrarians saw cities as engines of wealth but rejected the frenzied pursuit of riches. The Opportunity Society tends to see cities as drains on the national wealth, unlike the hardworking, wealth-creating suburbs.

It was fascinating during the campaign to see welfare reform leap to the top of voter concern, especially in districts with no significant underclass and few of the pathologies we have come to label the urban issues. Why did welfare reform become such a hot issue in places where one would have thought the problems of the South Bronx or North Philadelphia would seem distant?

Surely the spread of street gangs to places like Colorado and Nebraska had profound consequences: when Crips and Bloods start appearing in your boondock, urban breakdown gains immediacy. More important, the underclass is now seen as an emblem of moral decay everywhere—a decay arguably precipitated by the adversarial attitudes of the urban elites. Finally, voters began to feel that they were working harder for stagnant wages because cities were siphoning off the product of their labor to support the underclass. Phil Gramm captures the sentiment in an applause line in his welfare reform speech: the people riding in the wagons, he says, should not be living better than those pulling the wagons.

Big-city mayors are quick to point out that the cities are not drains on the national wealth but wealth creators. Mayor Giuliani's office emphasizes that New York City, with only 41 percent of New York State's population, accounts for 54 percent of the state's earnings. Moreover, the city accounts for over 40 percent of the earnings of those who live in Nassau and Westchester counties. But at a recent breakfast with journalists, Giuliani acknowledged that big cities have gotten the reputation as drains on the national wealth because big-city mayors are forever seen with hat in hand begging for money from Washington. Behave like a pauper long enough, and people believe you are a pauper.

Is there any sign that suburban and exurban voters will soon be cured of their antipathy to big-city elites and big-city pathologies? Will New Yorkers come to understand their fellow Americans? And meanwhile, what will be the result of heightened urban-exurban tensions?

For now, count on an increasing sense of alienation and defensiveness among New Yorkers, a heightened crankiness and disgust when they regard Middle America. *New York* magazine's post-election cover story, "Why America Hates New York," is a straw in the wind. Yielding few insights about how others view New York, the story is a treasure trove of New York attitudes toward the rest of the country. A reporter was dispatched to Newt Gingrich's suburban Georgia district to interview his constituents. The constituents the magazine chose included extreme specimens: former segregationist Governor Lester Maddox, for instance, along with a fiery preacher who cites Toynbee to describe New York's imminent doom, and a longhaired biker type named "Wildman" Myers, photographed with rifle, Confederate flag, devil rings, and a Klan outfit. *New York*'s writer portrays what he calls Gingrichland as a place of almost authoritarian conformity. He omits the detail that Gingrich wins reelection every two years with but slender majorities.

Over the longer term, New Yorkers might—dare I say it?—change. New York liberalism will gradually dissolve; cultural attitudes will drift toward the mainstream. My own experience suggests a small ripple in this direction. Since the election I've had several conversations with fellow New Yorkers and overheard several conversations in New York restaurants (a typically mixed blessing of urban life)—conversations in which people express disgust with Gingrich and company but then go on to label themselves "conservative" Democrats or independents. These people were not conservative Democrats a few months ago, one ventures to guess. Elections are intellectual events; they shift the frame of debate, even when people scarcely notice it.

CULVER PICTURES, INC.

Another long-term possibility is that Republicans will develop a metropolitan ideal of their own as they inhabit the citadels of power. Until now, many of the most articulate Republican politicians, above all Newt Gingrich, have been hybrids, sharing the views of the American mainstream but also belonging to an emerging counter-counterculture. As professors, sometimes even city dwellers, they found themselves surrounded by the adversary culture, against which they contended. Their enemies on the left were often more immediate presences than their allies on the right, and they focused much of their energy on combating liberal bias in the media and political correctness on campus.

Things have changed. However appropriate these endeavors once were for conservatives and Republicans, there has been an element of minoritarianism in them. Now, however, the victorious Gingrich and company will find it hard to maintain the characteristic adversarial tone of the little and persecuted conservative standing up to the dominant media elite. Moreover, members of the counter-counterculture have allowed their rivals to be arbiters of how they were doing, ceding supremacy to institutions like the *New York Times* and whining at perceived slights. Acting like a majority means claiming for yourself the power to arbitrate and consecrate.

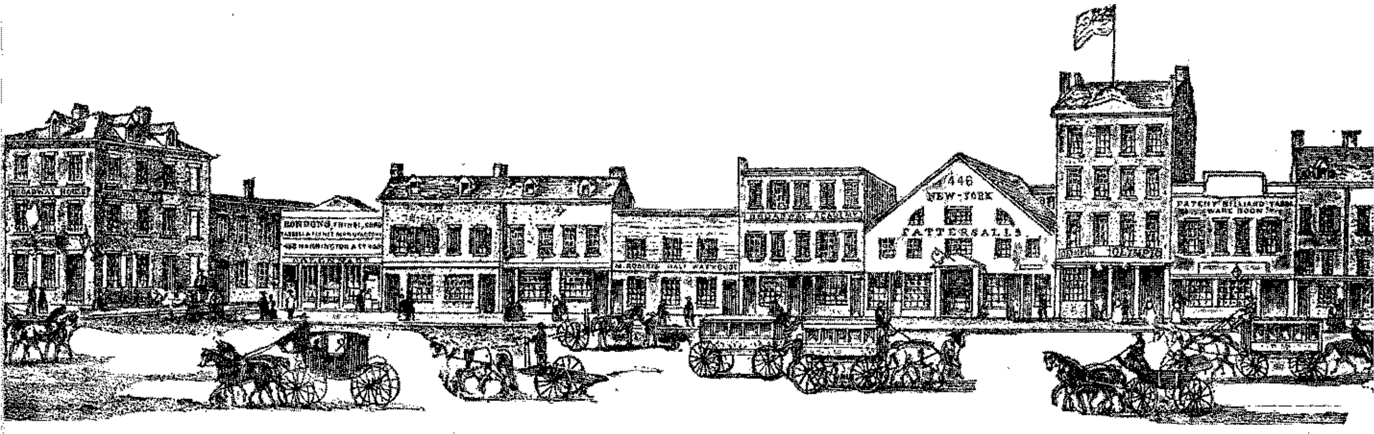
If Republicans form a long-term majority, perhaps they'll stop wasting so much energy reacting to Democratic attitudes. Perhaps they'll develop a vision that acknowledges that virtue can sometimes be the product of cultivation and social interchange—of the urbanity that belongs to cities.

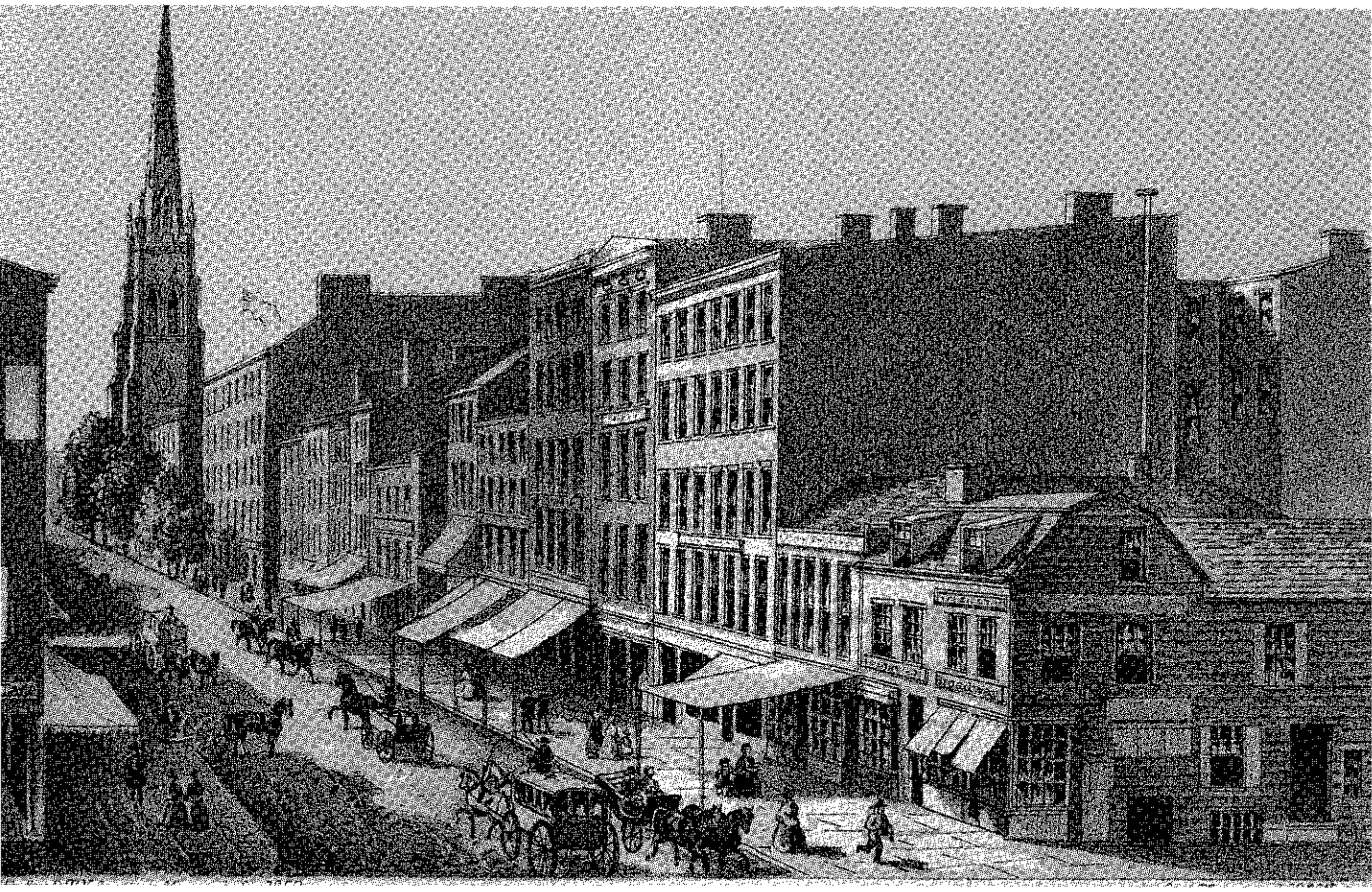
An acknowledgment of metropolitan creativity would certainly be good for the Republican party. A flourishing two-party debate would be as good for New York. New York has done pretty well this century as the pinnacle of American ideas and culture. It would be a shame if New York dragged on through the next decades as a wayward home for cranky, marginalized dissenters. ●

An Englishwoman in New York, 1831

Frances Trollope

In 1827, Frances Trollope, aged 47 and mother of not-yet-famous Anthony Trollope, sailed from England to America, aiming to repair her family's bedraggled fortunes in the New World. She founded a spectacular department store in the raw frontier town of Cincinnati, but it no less spectacularly failed, wiping her out financially. Back in England three years later, she published Domestic Manners of the Americans, *a spirited, highly critical account of her adventures and travels in the new republic. The book became a best-seller and made her famous. For most of what she saw in America, her book is filled with censure—of the crudity, the incessant tobacco chewing and spitting, the boastfulness, the lawless-*





Broadway in 1834 (above) and (previous page) in 1840.

ness. But in New York, alone of all American cities, she found much to praise.

I have never seen the bay of Naples, I can therefore make no comparison, but my imagination is incapable of conceiving any thing of the kind more beautiful than the harbour of New York. . . . I doubt if ever the pencil of Turner could do it justice, bright and glorious as it rose upon us. We seemed to enter the harbour of New York upon waves of liquid gold, and as we darted past the green isles which rise from its bosom, like guardian centinels of the fair city, the setting sun stretched his horizontal beams farther and farther at each moment, as if to point out to us some new glory in the landscape.

New York, indeed, appeared to us, even when we saw it by a soberer light, a lovely and a noble city. To us who had been so long travelling through half-cleared forests, and sojourning among an "I'm-as-good-as-you" population, it seemed, perhaps, more beautiful, more splendid, and more refined than it might have done, had we arrived there directly from London; but making every allowance for this, I must still declare that I think New York one of the finest cities I ever saw, and as much superior to every other in the Union, (Philadelphia not excepted,) as London to Liverpool, or Paris to Rouen. Its advantages of position are, perhaps, unequalled any where. Situated on an island, which I think it will one day cover, it rises, like Venice, from the sea, and like that fairest of cities in the days of her glory, receives into its lap tribute of all the riches of the earth.

The southern point of Manhatten Island divides the waters of the harbour into the north and east rivers; on this point stands the city of New York, extending from river to river, and running northward to the extent of three or four miles. I think it covers nearly

CULVER PICTURES, INC.

Urbanities

as much ground as Paris, but is much less thickly peopled. The extreme point is fortified towards the sea by a battery, and forms an admirable point of defence; but in these piping days of peace, it is converted into a public promenade, and one more beautiful, I should suppose, no city could boast. From hence commences the splendid Broadway, as the fine avenue is called, which runs through the whole city. This noble street may vie with any I ever saw, for its length and breadth, its handsome shops, neat awnings, excellent *trottoir*, and well-dressed pedestrians. It has not the crowded glitter of Bond-street equipages, nor the gorgeous fronted palaces of Regent-street; but it is magnificent in its extent, and ornamented by several handsome buildings, some of them surrounded by grass and trees. The Park, in which stands the noble city-hall, is a very fine area. . . . During the seven weeks we stayed there, we always found something new to see and to admire; and were it not so very far from all the old-world things which cling about the heart of an European, I should say that I never saw a city more desirable as a residence.

Dwellings of the higher classes are extremely handsome, and very richly furnished. Silk or satin furniture is as often, or oftener, seen than chintz; the mirrors are as handsome as in London; the cheffoniers, slabs, and marble tables as elegant; and in addition, they have all the pretty tasteful decoration of French porcelaine, and ormolu in much greater abundance, because at a much cheaper rate. Every part of their houses is well carpeted, and the exterior finishing, such as steps, railings, and doorframes, are very superior. Almost every house has handsome green blinds on the outside; balconies are not very general, nor do the houses display, externally, so many flowers as those of Paris and London; but I saw many rooms decorated within, exactly like those of an European *petite maîtresse*. Little tables, looking and smelling like flower beds, portfolios, nick-nacks, bronzes, busts, cameos, and alabaster vases, illustrated copies of lady-like rhymes bound in silk, and, in short, all the pretty coxcomalities of the drawing-room scattered about with the same profuse and studied negligence as with us.

Hudson Square [bounded by Hudson, Laight, Varick, and Beach Streets] and its neighbourhood is, I believe, the most fashionable part of the town; the square is beautiful, excellently well planted with a great variety of trees, and only wanting our frequent and careful mowing to make it equal to any square in London. The iron railing which surrounds this enclosure is as high and as handsome as that of the Tuilleries, and it will give some idea of the care bestowed on its decoration, to know that the gravel for the walks was conveyed by barges from Boston, not as ballast, but as freight.

The great defect in the houses is their extreme uniformity—when you have seen one, you have seen all. Neither do I quite like the arrangement of the rooms. In nearly all the houses the dining and drawing-rooms are on the same floor, with ample folding doors between them; when thrown together they certainly make a very noble apartment; but no doors can be barrier sufficient between dining and drawing-rooms. Mixed dinner parties of ladies and gentlemen, however, are very rare, which is a great defect in the society; not only as depriving them of the most social and hospitable manner of meeting, but as leading to frequent dinner parties of gentlemen without ladies, which certainly does not conduce to refinement.

The evening parties, excepting such as are expressly for young people, are chiefly conversational; we were too late in the season for large parties, but we saw enough to convince us that there is society to be met with in New York, which would be deemed delightful any where. Cards are very seldom used; and music, from their having very little professional aid at their parties, is seldom, I believe, as good as what is heard at private concerts in London.

The Americans have certainly not the same *besoin* of being amused, as other people; they may be the wiser for this, perhaps, but it makes them less agreeable to a looker-on.

There are three theatres at New York, all of which we visited. The Park Theatre is the only one licensed by fashion, but the Bowery is infinitely superior in beauty; it is indeed as pretty a theatre as I ever entered, perfect as to size and proportion, elegantly decorated, and the scenery and machinery equal to any in London, but it is not the fashion. The Chatham is so utterly condemned by *bon ton*, that it requires some courage to decide upon going there; nor do I think my curiousity would have penetrated so far, had I not seen Miss Mitford's Rienzi advertised there. It was the first opportunity I had had of seeing it played, and spite of very indifferent acting, I was delighted. The interest must have been great, for till the curtain fell, I saw not one quarter of the queer things around me: then I observed in the front row of a dress-box a lady performing the most maternal office possible; several gentlemen without their coats, and a general air of contempt for the decencies of life, certainly more than usually revolting.

At the Park Theatre . . . we saw Cinderella. The piece was extremely well got up, and on this occasion we saw the Park Theatre to advantage, for it was filled with well-dressed company; but still we saw many "yet unrazored lips" polluted with the grim tinge of the hateful tobacco, and heard, without ceasing, the spitting, which of course is its consequence. If their theatres had the orchestra of the Feydeau, and a choir of angels to boot, I could find but little pleasure, so long as they were followed by this running accompaniment of *thorough base*. . . .

The Exchange is very handsome, and ranks about midway between the heavy gloom that hangs over our London merchants, and the light and lofty elegance which decorates the Bourse at Paris. The churches are plain, but very neat, and kept in perfect repair within and without; but I saw none which had the least pretension to splendour; the Catholic cathedral at Baltimore is the only church in America which has.

At New York, as every where else, they shew within, during the time of service, like beds of tulips, so gay, so bright, so beautiful, are the long rows of French bonnets and pretty faces; rows but rarely broken by the unribboned heads of the male population; the proportion is about the same as I have remarked elsewhere. Excepting at New York, I never saw the other side of the picture, but there I did. On the opposite side of the North River, about three miles higher up, is a place called Hoboken. A gentleman who possessed a handsome mansion and grounds there, also possessed the right of ferry, and to render this productive, he has restricted his pleasure grounds to a few beautiful acres, laying out the remainder simply and tastefully as a public walk. It is hardly possible to imagine one of greater attraction; a broad belt of light underwood and flowering shrubs, studded at intervals with lofty forest trees, runs for two miles along a cliff which overhangs the matchless Hudson; sometimes it feathers the rocks down to its very margin, and at others leaves a pebbly shore, just rude enough to break the gentle waves, and make a music which mimics softly the loud chorus of the ocean. —Through this beautiful little wood, a broad well-gravelled terrace is led by every point which can exhibit the scenery to advantage; narrower and wilder paths diverge at intervals, some into the deeper shadow of the woods, and some shelving gradually to the pretty coves below.

The price of entrance to this little Eden, is the six cents you pay at the ferry. We went there on a bright Sunday afternoon, expressly to see the humours of the place. Many thousand persons were scattered through the grounds; of these we ascertained, by repeatedly counting, that nineteen-twentieths were men. The ladies were at church. Often as the subject has pressed upon my mind, I think I never so strongly felt the conviction that the Sabbath-day, the holy day, the day on which alone the great majority of the Christian world can spend their hours as they

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

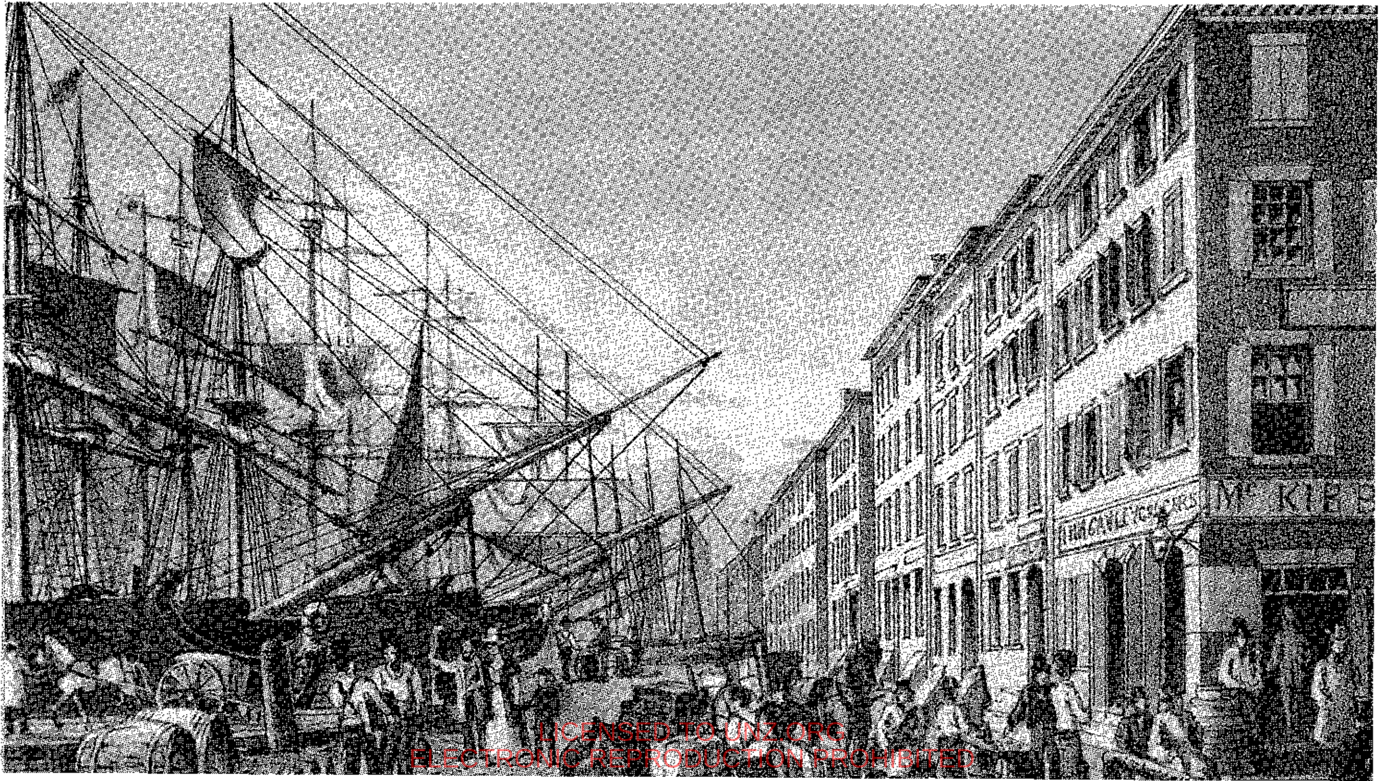
please, is ill passed (if passed entirely) within brick walls, listening to an earth-born preacher, charm he never so wisely....

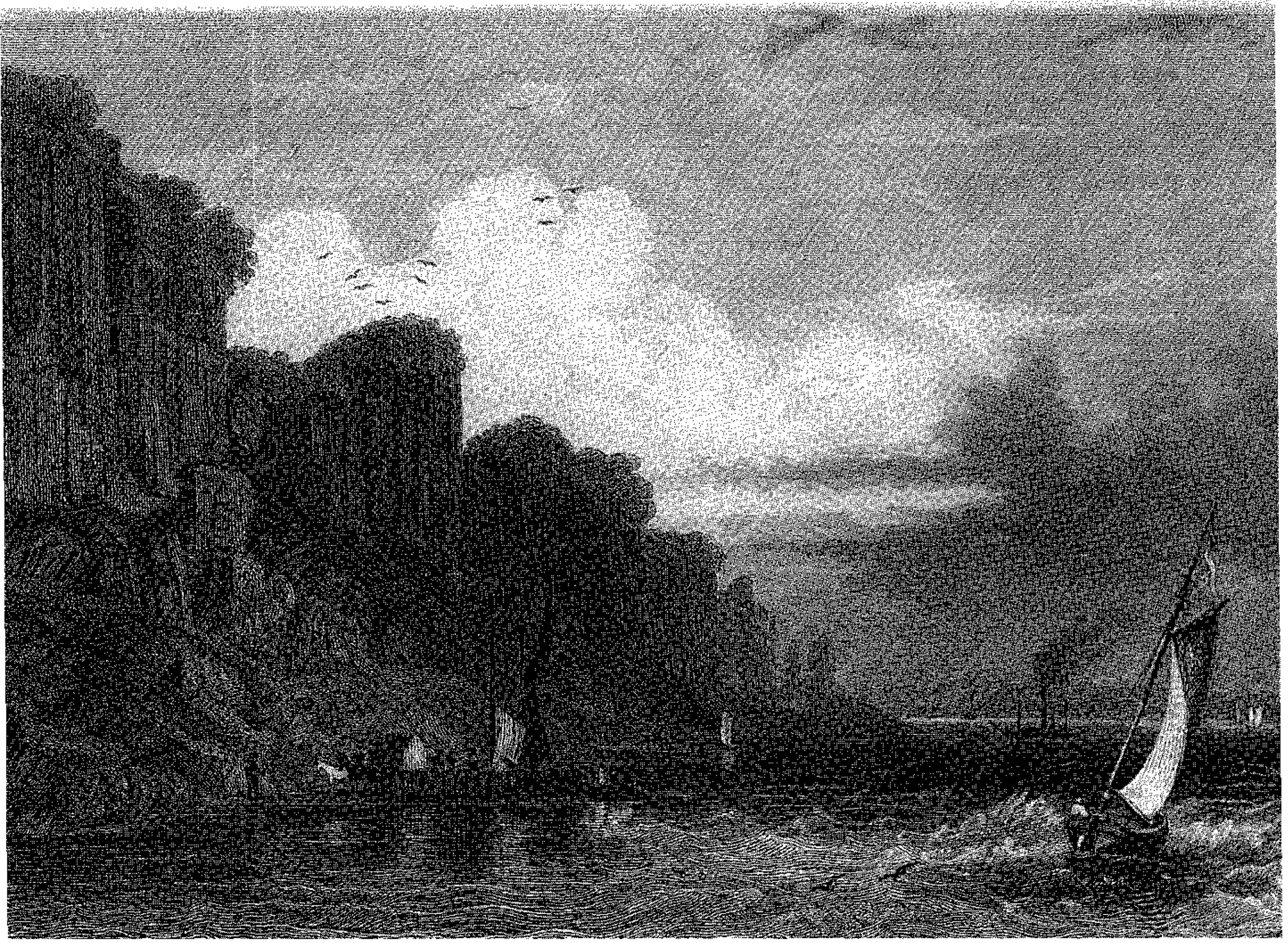
How is it that the men of America, who are reckoned good husbands and good fathers, while they themselves enjoy sufficient freedom of spirit to permit their walking forth into the temple of the living God, can leave those they love best on earth, bound in the iron chains of a most tyrannical fanaticism? . . .

It is impossible not to feel, after passing one Sunday in the churches and chapels of New York, and the next in the gardens of Hoboken, that the thousands of well-dressed men you see enjoying themselves at the latter, have made over the thousands of well-dressed women you saw exhibited at the former, into the hands of the priests, at least, for the day. The American people arrogate to themselves a character of superior morality and religion, but this division of their hours of leisure does not give me a favourable idea of either.

I visited all the exhibitions in New York. The Medici of the Republic must exert themselves a little more before these can become even respectable. The worst of the business is, that with the exception of about half a dozen individuals, the good citizens are more than contented, they are delighted. The newspaper lungs of the Republic breathe forth praise and triumph, nay, almost pant with extacy in speaking of their native *chef d'oeuvres*. I should be hardly believed were I to relate the instances which fell in my way, of the utter ignorance respecting pictures to be found among persons of the *first standing* in society. Often where a liberal spirit exists, and a wish to patronise the fine arts is expressed, it is joined to a profundity of ignorance on the subject almost inconceivable. A doubt as to the excellence of their artists is very nervously received, and one gentleman, with much civility, told me, that at the present era, all the world were aware that competition was pretty well at an end

On the river at South Street and Maiden Lane, 1828.





Looking west across the Hudson River to the New Jersey palisades.

between our two nations, and that a little envy might naturally be expected to mix with the surprise with which the mother country beheld the distance at which her colonies were leaving her behind them.

I must, however, do the few artists with whom I became acquainted, the justice to say, that their own pretensions are much more modest than those of their patrons for them. I have heard several confess and deplore their ignorance of drawing, and have repeatedly remarked a sensibility to the merit of European artists, though perhaps only known by engravings, and a deference to their authority, which shewed a genuine feeling for the art. In fact, I think that there is a very considerable degree of natural talent for painting in America, but it has to make its way through darkness and thick night. When an academy is founded, their first care is to hang the walls of its exhibition-room with all the unutterable trash that is offered to them. No living models are sought for; no discipline as to the manner of study is enforced. Boys who know no more of the human form, than they do of the eyes, nose, and mouth in the moon, begin painting portraits. If some of them would only throw away their palettes for a year, and learn to draw; if they would attend anatomical lectures, and take notes, not in words, but in forms, of joints and muscles, their exhibitions would soon cease to be so utterly below criticism. . . .

I can imagine nothing more perfect than the interior of the public institutions of New York. There is a practical good sense in all their arrangements that must strike foreigners very forcibly. The Asylum for the Destitute offers a hint worth taking. It is dedicated to the reformation of youthful offenders of both sexes, and it is as admirable in the details of its management, as in its object. Every part of the institution is deeply interesting; but there is a difference very remarkable between the boys and the girls. The boys are, I think, the finest set of lads I ever saw brought together; bright looking, gay, active, and

Urbanities

CULVER PICTURES, INC.

full of intelligence. The girls are exactly the reverse; heavy, listless, indifferent, and melancholy. In conversing with the gentleman who is the general superintendant of the establishment, I made the remark to him, and he told me, that the reality corresponded with the appearance. All of them had been detected in some act of dishonesty; but the boys, when removed from the evil influence which had led them so to use their ingenuity, rose like a spring when a pressure is withdrawn; and feeling themselves once more safe from danger, and from shame, hope and cheerfulness animated every countenance. But the poor girls, on the contrary, can hardly look up again. They are as different as an oak and a lily after a storm. The one, when the fresh breeze blows over it, shakes the raindrops from its crest, and only looks the brighter; the other, its silken leaves once soiled, shrinks from the eye, and is levelled to the earth for ever.

We spent a delightful day in New Jersey, in visiting, with a most agreeable party, the inclined planes, which are used instead of locks on the Morris canal.

This is a very interesting work; it is one among a thousand which prove the people of America to be the most enterprising in the world. I was informed that this important canal, which connects the waters of the Hudson and the Delaware, is a hundred miles long, and in this distance overcomes a variation of level amounting to sixteen hundred feet. . . .

There is no point in the national character of the Americans which commands so much respect as the boldness and energy with which public works are undertaken and carried through. Nothing stops them if a profitable result can be fairly hoped for. It is this which has made cities spring up amidst the forests with such inconceivable rapidity; and could they once be thoroughly persuaded that any point of the ocean had a hoard of dollars beneath it, I have not the slightest doubt that in about eighteen months we should see a snug covered railroad leading direct to the spot.

I was told at New York, that in many parts of the state it was usual to pay the service of the Presbyterian ministers in the following manner. Once a year a day is fixed on which some member of every family in a congregation meet at their minister's house in the afternoon. They each bring an offering (according to their means) of articles necessary for housekeeping. The poorer members leave their contributions in a large basket, placed for the purpose, close to the door of entrance. Those of more importance, and more calculated to do honour to the piety of the donors, are carried into the room where the company is assembled. Sugar, coffee, tea, cheese, barrels of flour, pieces of Irish linen, sets of china and of glass, were among the articles mentioned to me as usually making parts of these offerings. After the party is assembled, and the business of giving and receiving is dispatched, tea, coffee, and cakes are handed round; but these are not furnished at any expense either of trouble or money to the minister, for selected ladies of the congregation take the whole arrangement upon themselves. These meetings are called spinning visits.

Another New York custom, which does not seem to have so reasonable a cause, is the changing house once a year. On the 1st of May the city of New York has the appearance of sending off a population flying from the plague, or of a town which had surrendered on condition of carrying away all their goods and chattels. Rich furniture and ragged furniture, carts, waggons, and drays, ropes, canvas, and straw, packers, porters, and draymen, white, yellow, and black, occupy the streets from east to west, from north to south, on this day. Every one I spoke to on the subject complained of this custom as most annoying, but all assured me it was unavoidable, if you inhabit a rented house. More than one of my New York friends have built or bought houses solely to avoid this annual inconvenience.

There are a great number of negroes in New York, all free;

their emancipation having been completed in 1827. Not even in Philadelphia, where the anti-slavery opinions have been the most active and violent, do the blacks appear to wear an air of so much consequence as they do at New York. They have several chapels, in which negro ministers officiate; and a theatre in which none but negroes perform [at the corner of Bleecker and Mercer Streets]. At this theatre a gallery is appropriated to such whites as choose to visit it; and here only are they permitted to sit; following in this, with nice etiquette, and equal justice, the arrangement of the white theatres, in all of which is a gallery appropriated solely to the use of the blacks. I have often, particularly on a Sunday, met groups of negroes, elegantly dressed; and have been sometimes amused by observing the very superior air of gallantry assumed by the men, when in attendance on their *belles,* to that of the whites in similar circumstances. On one occasion we met in Broadway a young negress in the extreme of the fashion, and accompanied by a black beau, whose toilet was equally studied; eye-glass, guard-chain, nothing was omitted; he walked beside his sable goddess uncovered, and with an air of the most tender devotion. At the window of a handsome house which they were passing, stood a very pretty white girl, with two gentlemen beside her; but alas! both of them had their hats on, and one was smoking!

If it were not for the peculiar manner of walking, which distinguishes all American women, Broadway might be taken for a French street, where it was the fashion for very smart ladies to promenade. The dress is entirely French; not an article (except perhaps the cotton stockings) must be English, on pain of being stigmatized as out of the fashion. Every thing English is decidedly *mauvais ton*; English materials, English fashions, English accent, English manner, are all terms of reproach; and to say that an unfortunate looks like an English woman, is the cruellest satire which can be uttered.

I remember visiting France almost immediately after we had made the most offensive invasion of her territory that can well be imagined, yet, despite the feelings which lengthened years of war must have engendered, it was the fashion to admire every thing English. I suppose family quarrels are more difficult to adjust; for fifteen years of peace have not been enough to calm the angry feelings of brother Jonathan towards the land of his fathers, "The which he hateth passing well."

It is hardly needful to say that the most courteous amenity of manner distinguishes the reception given to foreigners by the patrician class of Americans.

Gentlemen, in the old world sense of the term, are the same every where; and an American gentleman and his family know how to do the honours of their country to strangers of every nation, as well as any people on earth. But this class, though it decidedly exists, is a very small one, and cannot, in justice, be represented as affording a specimen of the whole.

Most of the houses in New York are painted on the outside, but in a manner carefully to avoid disfiguring the material which it preserves: on the contrary, nothing can be neater. They are now using a great deal of beautiful stone called Jersey freestone; it is of a warm rich brown, and extremely ornamental to the city wherever it has been employed. They have also a grey granite of great beauty. The trottoir paving in most of the streets is extremely good, being of large flag stones, very superior to the bricks of Philadelphia.

At night the shops, which are open till very late, are brilliantly illuminated with gas, and all the population seem as much alive as in London or Paris. This makes the solemn stillness of the evening hours in Philadelphia still more remarkable.

There are a few trees in different parts of the city, and I observed many young ones planted, and guarded with much care; were they more abundant it would be extremely agreeable, for the reflected light of their fierce summer sheds intolerable day.

Ice is in profuse abundance; I do not imagine that there is a house in the city without the luxury of a piece of ice to cool the water, and harden the butter.

The hackney coaches are the best in the world, but abominably dear, and it is necessary to be on the *qui vive* in making your bargain with the driver; if you do not, he has the power of charging immoderately. On my first experiment I neglected this, and was asked two dollars and a half for an excursion of twenty minutes. When I referred to the waiter of the hotel, he asked if I had made a bargain. "No." "Then I expect" (with the usual look of triumph) "that the Yankee has been too smart for you."

The private carriages of New York are infinitely handsomer and better appointed than any I saw elsewhere; the want of smart liveries destroys much of the gay effect, but, on the whole, a New York summer equipage, with the pretty women and beautiful children it contains, look extremely well in Broadway, and would not be much amiss any where.

The luxury of the New York aristocracy is not confined to the city; hardly an acre of Manhatten Island but shews some pretty villa or stately mansion. The most chosen of these are on the north and east rivers, to whose margins their lawns descend. Among these, perhaps, the loveliest is one situated [on the Hudson at 106th Street] in the beautiful village of Bloomingdale; here, within the space of sixteen acres, almost every variety of garden scenery may be found. To describe all its diversity of hill and dale, of wood and lawn, of rock and river, would be in vain; nor can I convey an idea of it by comparison, for I never saw any thing like it. How far the elegant hospitality which reigns there may influence my impressions, I know not; but, assuredly, no spot I have ever seen dwells more freshly on my memory, nor did I ever find myself in a circle more calculated to give delight in meeting, and regret at parting, than that of Woodlawn.

Mrs. Trollope, after traveling from New York to Niagara Falls, returned to the city briefly before sailing home to England.

Nothing could be more beautiful than our passage down the Hudson on the following day, as I thought of some of my friends in England, dear lovers of the picturesque, I could not but [feel sorry they couldn't see it]. Not even a moving panoramic view, gliding before their eyes for an hour together, in all the scenic splendour of Drury Lane, or Covent Garden, could give them an idea of it. They could only see one side at a time. The change, the contrast, the ceaseless variety of beauty, as you skim from side to side, the liquid smoothness of the broad mirror that reflects the scene, and most of all, the clear bright air through which you look at it; all this can only be seen and believed by crossing the Atlantic.

As we approached New York the burning heat of the day relaxed, and the long shadows of evening fell coolly on the beautiful villas we passed. I really can conceive nothing more exquisitely lovely than this approach to the city. The magnificent boldness of the Jersey shore on the one side, and the luxurious softness of the shady lawns on the other, with the vast silvery stream that flows between them, altogether form a picture which may well excuse a traveller for saying, once and again, that the Hudson river can be surpassed in beauty by none on the outside of Paradise.

It was nearly dark when we reached the city, and it was with great satisfaction that we found our comfortable apartments in Hudson Street unoccupied; and our pretty, kind (Irish) hostess willing to receive us again. We passed another fortnight there; and again we enjoyed the elegant hospitality of New York, though now it was offered from beneath the shade of their beautiful villas. In truth, were all America like this fair city, and all, no, only a small proportion of its population like the friends we left there, I should say, that the land was the fairest in the world. ●

The Hidden Rooms Behind Museum Displays

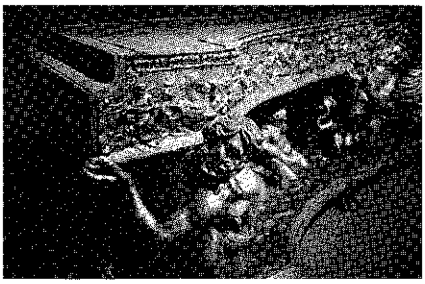
Roger Starr

Every important museum has a front room and a back room. The front room, with everything arranged and explained, is the one that visitors see. But the back room arouses my curiosity. That's where experts study, care for, and make sense of the objects in the collection, helping to determine which pieces are worthy of being displayed. On the relationship between the front room and the knowledge-enlarging back room a museum's value and prestige depend.

New York City's museums are world-renowned, of course, and key to this renown are back rooms that rank with the city's universities as educational institutions, generating and diffusing knowledge. I decided to explore the back rooms of two of New York's greatest museums—though at different ends of the museum spectrum—to see how they do it.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, more than 100 years old, defines art broadly: painting, sculpture, and architecture, but also arms and armor, pottery, furniture, jewelry, silverware, costume, and musical instruments. A visitor to the gallery of musical instruments, nestled between the galleries of European painting and American art, has no trouble recognizing the musical instruments on display as works of art: aside from the music they make, they provide another deep satisfaction to the aesthetic sense in, for instance, the artistry that melds a complex of curves into the simplicity of a classic violin's structure.

To walk through the gallery is to experience a new understanding of the process of cultural and technological evolution. The visitor starts at a collection of Asian, primarily Indian, plucked-string instruments including vinas, which were invented at least 1,500 years ago, although the examples in the museum are only about 200 years old. Still widely played in the East, the vina consists of a long, hollow, fretted stick along which the strings are stretched. One, two, or three gourds attached to the stick represent an early effort to achieve the kind of resonance that a violin's hollow body produces.



If one walks to the other end of the gallery and looks at the Stradivari and Amati violins on display in a glass case, it seems inconceivable that they could have descended from these early stringed instruments of the East. But the museum has a fascinating collection of stringed instruments showing the steps by which the early Eastern examples evolved into the peerless violins that the Amati, Guarneri, and Stradivari families produced in Italy from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. They developed from other types of bowed instruments, like the viola da gamba that was held between or on the knees. Those instruments in turn descended from a long line of plucked instruments, some harp-like, that rested in a supine rather than upright position, others handheld, the ancestors of lutes, mandolins, and guitars. Many of these instruments are elaborately decorated, sometimes with marquetry in wood or ivory, sometimes even with painting.

Violin innovation practically stopped after the passing of the last of the classic Italian and German makers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They had achieved the pinnacle of evolution. Our contemporaries, turning in another direction, developed mechanical and then electronic ways to make the music of violinists audible to multitudes. Yet no one would claim that listening to the Kreutzer sonata on the stereo at home matches the social experience of sitting in an auditorium (preferably a small one) and not only hear-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HARRY HELEOTIS (3)

ing the music and sensing the reaction of others around, but being enthralled by the occasional flash of light on the violin itself, the movement of the player's arms and upper body, the perfectly contrived conjunction of the mobile bow and the nearly motionless violin.

The Metropolitan Museum understands that keeping its extensive and diverse collection of instruments in good condition requires the full-time services of a conservator. Stewart Pollens, who has been with the Met for 18 years, is one of only two such experts to hold a post at an American museum; the other one is in Vermillion, South Dakota, at the University of South Dakota's Shrine for Music.

When I met Pollens at the museum, he conducted me through an easily overlooked doorway tucked between an Egyptian sarcophagus and a statue on the first floor, down a utilitarian stairway, and into the basement, an immense space containing staff offices, workshops, and seemingly endless steel shelving on which vaguely discernible musical instruments, wrapped in heavy plastic coating, wait for the moment when they will be exhibited proudly upstairs.

Stewart Pollens in his underground workshop at the Met.

Despite his nearly two decades in an underground office and workshops at the Metropolitan Museum, Pollens looks like a young instructor at a New England college that emphasizes outdoor sports. Forthcoming and cheerful, he is obviously enamored of the objects on whose well-being he spends his time. What does a professional conservator of musical instruments do in a typical day at the office?

Consider 1985's special exhibition of early pianos, which included about 30 instruments from the museum's permanent collection, some centuries-old. "To prepare for that was a lot of work for me," says Pollens. "The instruments came from a storage area, and many of them had been neglected or not taken out of their protective coverings in 100 years." Putting them in shape was no easy task. "Pianos are very complicated. Moldings and ornaments and casters had gotten lost or damaged over the years. I spent a good year and a half almost single-handedly getting those instruments together."

Despite his passion for music, Pollens is no musician himself. "I studied piano growing up but never had any inclination, or the talent, to become a concert artist. I did play the clarinet in my high school band." In college he majored in psychology. But after college he found a way to pursue his love of music. He served a series of apprenticeships, one in harpsichord building with John Challis, a noted American maker, and another in organ building. He also did some work restoring violins and trained with a violin maker.

Pollens's front-room counterpart is Laurence Libin, who heads the Department of Musical Instruments for the Met. Libin decides what events take place, using which instruments. "Often the instruments themselves dictate that," Pollens says. "Some are too weak for display; some have too many original parts that have to be replaced or changed or altered, after which the authenticity of the instrument is undermined."

The Metropolitan Museum of Art also sponsors concerts, so Pollens often must render the instruments playable as well as displayable. He keeps the museum's harpsichords, clavichords, and pianos in tune. "Last year we had a concert using some early guitars and flutes playing in combination," he says. "The flutes needed work on their little springs and pads to get the actions working. The guitar frets were loose, and they buzzed."

Not all the instruments make it to the concert stage. "We do not use any woodwind instruments, like oboes and clarinets, in concert, because it's too dangerous," Pollens explains. "An early eighteenth-century oboe would certainly crack and might well be no longer in tune, because the bores have shrunk and the instrument is warped. The instrument no longer represents itself in an accurate way. To start to retune or re-voice a recorder or an oboe is something you just would not do—you're altering the maker's work. You have more of a chance of knowing how it sounds by making up a very, very accurate replica. That's why we do not discourage instrument makers from taking measurements of the old instrument in order, perhaps, to copy it as precisely as one can—although possibly with different materials."

In a recent loan exhibit of Guarneri violins, the museum got permission to use 18 of the 25 instruments in a concert the last weekend of the exhibition. Five performers played pieces for unaccompanied violin by Paganini, Bach, and others. "The most thrilling instrument was Paganini's Cannon, the famous violin he bequeathed to Genoa, city of his birth," Pollens recalls. "It looks horrible, but some of the original varnish is still there. It's actually one of the few instruments of that period that have not been gone over relentlessly every year. In fact, when the instrument is taken off display in the Genoa City Hall, it's placed in a wooden case with a ribbon around it and the seal of Genoa on it. They sent two people with it, neither of whom was a violin expert. They wanted very nervous people to guard it."

Pollens has written a book about the violin that a London press published and sold out at $250 a copy. The book is about a specific piece of wood, or form, that Stradivari used in the process of making a violin. It was a pattern of the violin-to-be—a plan, so to speak, as though the observer is looking down on it. Against the outside edges of the form, the maker pressed the pliable thin wood side piece—called the rib—of the violin. The rib joins the top (or belly) of the new violin to the bottom (or back), carrying out the form's complex curves.

"The forms that I wrote about are planks about three-quarters of an inch thick, cut to match exactly the shape that Stradivari wanted for the particular violin under construction. The prospective rib, about one millimeter thick, is heated to make it especially pliable and then bent along the edge of the form. A good number of the forms survive, and what I tried to do in the book was to analyze what changes in the shape of the violin were attempted by Stradivari over the years and perhaps to understand what he sought from each change, when one form differed in any respect from its predecessor."

To complete his book on Stradivari, Pollens went back and forth to Cremona, Italy, three or four times, with some financial assistance from the museum. He's written another book, about the history of the early pianoforte, which is coming out soon. "I've spent at least 15 years on it—more."

Pollens and the Metropolitan Museum of Art provide more than edification for the museum's visitors. They are also assembling what one might call scientific data for all those whose passion is historic instruments. Since these classic instruments are not immortal, Pollens may be making it possible for future craftsmen, following his detailed findings, to make violins that not even the best educated ear will be able to distinguish from a Stradivari or a Guarneri.

As a child on the West Side of Manhattan many years ago, I regularly attended Saturday morning movies for young people at the American Museum of Natural History. The films were silent: the one sound, aside from the live narrator's voice, was the tapping of his long bamboo pointer on the plaster wall that served as a screen. He wanted to be sure that we, the nature-deprived urban kids sitting before him, could make out the bird on the film, camouflaged in the tree, or the toad, crouched among old leaves and new at the edge of a stream.

In those days, the museum produced a hero of its own, Roy Chapman Andrews. A young paleontologist on the museum's staff, he persuaded the museum's president in 1920 to send him to Mongolia to explore the Gobi Desert. He became both a popular legend—the basis of Harrison Ford's character in the Indiana Jones movies—and a scientific pioneer, who in the late twenties discovered the first dinosaur eggs.

Michael Novacek at the American Museum of Natural History.

It was not until last summer that I broadened my childish understanding of what the museum is about. While researching a story about sportfishing in New York Harbor, I went to the New York Aquarium in Coney Island for information about the present piscine population in the lower Hudson River.

"I don't think you want me," said the gentleman at the aquarium. "You want Dr. C. Lovett Smith, the curator of fish at the Museum of Natural History." Smith, whose actual title is curator of herpetology and ichthyology, graciously told me all I needed to know and presented me with an issue of the *American Museum Novitiates,* a regular publication of the museum. The issue was devoted to a documentation of Hudson River fish by Smith and Thomas R. Lake, director of the Hudson River Fishermen's Association.

The paper identifies 201 species of fish, whose enumeration required assembling all the credible written records of fish identification over the

NEW YORK
BOUND
Bookshop

SPECIALIZING IN
RARE AND
OUT-OF-PRINT
AS WELL AS
NEW BOOKS AND
PRINTS RELATING
TO NEW YORK

◆

Books · Maps · Prints
Photographs
Ephemera

◆

50 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York
245-8503

years—a dry, painstaking task. I realized that the museum was not simply a hall of fame for the trophies of exploring heroes but also where scientists assemble data to support or refute whatever theory of climate, water quality, habitats, and species relationships they may be exploring.

The scientists in that laboratory—the American Museum of Natural History's back room—accumulate the material that goes on display in the front room. How does the museum balance its staff time between the front and back rooms? The question led to the office of Michael Novacek, the museum's vice president and dean of science. A tall man with a head and beard of gloriously unrestrained copper-colored hair, the California-bred Novacek is quick to rise to his feet and extend a warm greeting in the Western spirit of outspoken commonality. He is a world-recognized paleontologist, with field and laboratory credentials, as well as a gifted museum administrator.

The American Museum of Natural History spends $14 million a year on research and study; 12 pages of its annual report list the scientific staff's learned works and other published materials. "There are a few museums—usually only in the great cities that can support them—that are research institutions as well as public education institutions," says Novacek. "One can have a museum without research, but I think there's a particularly distinctive flavor to our museum that can't be matched by these other institutions."

Part of that distinctiveness comes from the continual flow of knowledge from the back room to the exhibition halls. For example, an article by John P. Alexander, senior scientific assistant in vertebrate paleontology, in the museum's own popular publication, *Natural History*, describes the 1988 discovery of a 150-million-year-old prosimian fossil buried in the Wyoming badlands.

Alexander dug out the bones, more than 60 percent of the animal's skeleton. Alexander says the fossil provides scientists with a "Rosetta Stone" by which they can identify other fossils and expand their knowledge of primate evolution. It's an example of the kind of information a natural history museum needs constantly to keep its exhibits current and accurate in their descriptions. As Novacek puts it, "Without the effects of that scientific creativity, collections become archives."

While museum-goers marvel at the dinosaur skeletons and the dioramas of the African plains, the world's leading scientists work behind the scenes. "Although a lot of our research is focused on collections and exploration, like our work in the Gobi, there's quite a bit of advanced theoretical work that goes on here too," says Novacek. "Some of the most important figures in the development of evolutionary biology over the twentieth century were actually curators of the museum—George Gerhard Simpson, William Keane Gregory, and Ernst Meyer, who many think is the greatest living comparative biologist." E. O. Wilson, the Harvard biologist and author of the groundbreaking 1975 book *Sociobiology*, was a fellow and is now a trustee of the museum. "They all did their own fieldwork and analysis of their discoveries, but they invested time pondering basic questions in evolutionary biology—questions about how species emerge, how natural selection works, how populations change with time," says Novacek. Perhaps the most familiar name among the museum's past staffers is that of anthropologist Margaret Mead, who was a curator from 1926 to 1978.

Novacek sees the museum's mission in part as promoting basic scientific literacy among the general public. "I sometimes see in museums a tendency to make the wrong assumptions about the capacity of their visitors to understand basic scientific ideas presented in an honest and noncondescending way."

Museum-goers may be imperfect in their science literacy, but they have a genuine interest in learning more about science, Novacek says. In the mid-eighties, he recalls, the museum put on an exhibit of human ancestors. "All we had was a bunch of bones and cases. Thousands of people lined up to come and, I would say, 'worship' those things. They had a passionate interest in their evolutionary history; even these little fragments of the past interested them as much as they interested the researchers who were working on them. We must not err in undershooting our expectations for the public. . . . Think of the impact of this museum on a million or so school children, maybe more."

Displaying the objects of the latest scientific investigation to the museum-going public is part of what gives the Museum of Natural History its special flavor, Novacek thinks. Take, for example, the dinosaur embryo in its eggshell, which museum paleontologists discovered in the Gobi Desert in 1993. It was a unique find—the first intact dinosaur embryo ever discovered. It's now on display in the middle of the museum's Rotunda.

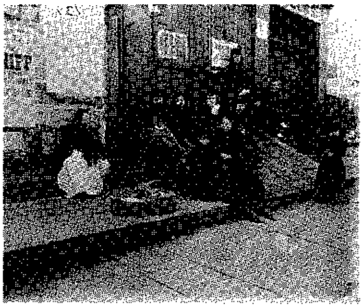
"Two or three days after Christmas," Novecek recalls, "I brought some friends to see it, and I could not even get near it. We had 28,000 people here one day, and there were three or four rows of people going up there to look at that thing. That was great, because that's what's required to distinguish a museum like ours—part public exhibition, part scientific research center—and remind New Yorkers that they have it in their city." ●

A CENTURY APART
IMAGES OF
STRUGGLE & SPIRIT

JACOB RIIS AND FIVE
CONTEMPORARY
PHOTOGRAPHERS

FEATURING WORKS BY:
MARTINE BARRAT
FRED R. CONRAD
MARY ELLEN MARK
MARGARET MORTON
JEFFREY HENSON SCALES

**AT THE MUSEUM
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**
1220 FIFTH AVE. AT 103RD ST.
JAN. 18, 1995–SEPT. 2, 1995



Oh, to be in England

Reader, She Married Him–Alas

Theodore Dalrymple

When multiculturalists imagine the future, I suspect they have something in mind like the glorious multiplicity of restaurants serving all the cuisines of the world which is now to be found in most large cities. You can eat Thai on Monday, Italian on Tuesday, Szechuan on Wednesday, Hungarian on Thursday, and so forth, without any strain whatever. Anyone who has withstood the rigors of English cooking is bound to welcome this particular development.

However, the multiculturalist vision of the good society seems to me to be about as profound and realistic as Marx's famous description of what life would be like under communism once society was no longer divided into competing classes. In communist society, wrote Marx, nobody would have one exclusive sphere of activity; instead a man might hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, and criticize after dinner, just as he had a mind to do, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic. Under multiculturalism, a man might turn towards Mecca in the morning, sacrifice a chicken in the afternoon, and go to Mass in the evening, without ever becoming a Muslim, an animist, or a Catholic.

As a doctor working in a slum area with many immigrant residents, I see multiculturalism from the ground up rather than from the theory down. And it is clear from what I see almost every day that not all cultural values are compatible or can be reconciled by the enunciation of platitudes. The idea that we can all rub along together, without the law having to discriminate in favor of one set of cultural values rather than another, is worse than merely false: it makes no sense whatever.

Let me say at once that I believe immigration to be a healthy phenomenon, particularly for an otherwise insular and inward-looking country such as Britain. Immigrants are generally hardworking and enterprising and enrich cultural life—provided, that is, they are not given victim status ex officio and their culture is not subjected to the sort of condescending patronage with which the Soviet state treated minorities.

Very large numbers of immigrants do in fact succeed in living in two cultures at once: not because anyone tells them to do so but because they want to and because they must.

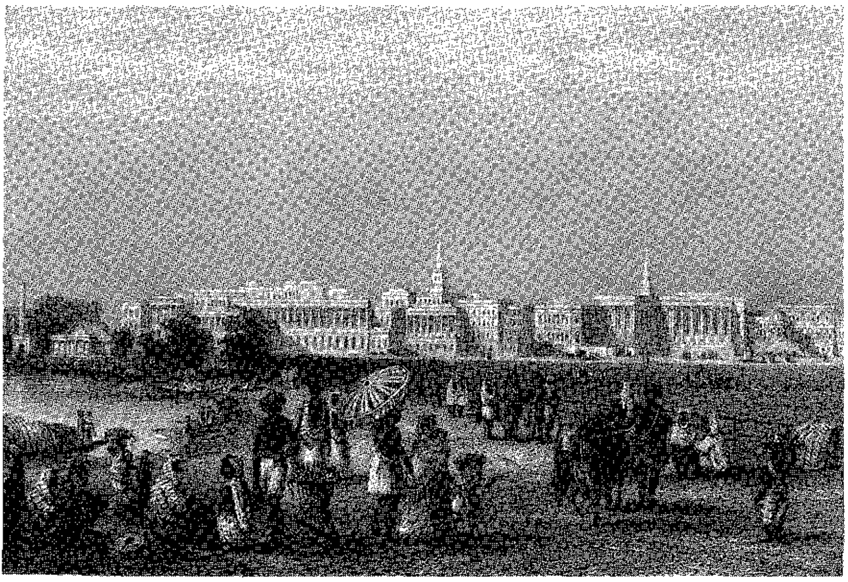
Despite such successes, however, conflicts frequently emerge between individuals and groups because of different cultural standards, beliefs, and expectations. For us, these conflicts can be resolved by appeal to the deeply ingrained higher principle embodied in the law, that individuals have the right (within defined limits) to choose how to live. But this Western notion of individualism and tolerance is by no means a conception in all cultures.

I am consulted by large numbers of young women whose parents came to England from India and Pakistan and remain deeply attached to the values which prevailed in the remote villages from which they emigrated 20 or 30 years ago. It is even possible that, despite the enterprising spirit that brought them from their homeland, they are more culturally conservative than their compatriots who remained at home: for migration across half the world is *very* stressful and disorienting, and old customs therefore become to some immigrants what soft toys are to children in the dark—a source of great comfort.

Be that as it may, their daughters, having grown up in a different cultural environment, no longer accept the customs to which their parents so tenaciously cling and which seem to them unquestionably right and natural. Conflict usually revolves around matters of education, career, and love.

A 16-year-old Muslim girl was referred to me because she had started to wet the bed at night. She was accompanied by her father, an unskilled factory worker of Pakistani origin, and was beautifully dressed in satins and chiffon, her ankles and wrists covered with gold bangles and bracelets. Her father was reluctant to let me speak to her on her own but at my insistence eventually permitted me to do so.

I realized at once that she was both highly intelligent and deeply unhappy. Because of my experience in such cases, it took little time to discover the source of her unhappiness.



ILLUSTRATIONS: THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE (3)

Her father had decided that she was to marry in a couple of months' time a man—a cousin—of whom she knew nothing. She, on the other hand, wished to continue her education, to study English literature at university and eventually to become a journalist. Although she controlled herself well—in the circumstances, heroically—there was absolutely no mistaking the passionate intensity of her wishes or of her despair. Her father, though, knew nothing of them: she had never dared tell him, because he was likely then to lock her in the house and forbid her ever to leave, except under close escort. As far as he was concerned, education, career, or choice of husbands was not for girls.

She saw her future life stretch endlessly before her, married to a man she did not love, performing thankless domestic drudgery not only for him but for her in-laws, who, according to custom, would live with them, while always dreaming of the wider world of which she had caught so brief and tantalizing a glimpse at school.

I interviewed her father, also on his own. I asked him what he thought was wrong with his daughter.

"Nothing," he replied. "She is happy, normal girl. Only she is wetting the bed."

There was nothing I could do, other than to prescribe medication. Had I tried to interfere, I could easily have precipitated an extreme reaction on his part. The girl's fears of being locked up were by no means exaggerated or absurd. I have known many instances of girls such as she who were imprisoned in their homes, sometimes for years, by their relatives; there is even a special unit of the local police dedicated to rescuing them, once information has been laid that they are being held at home against their will.

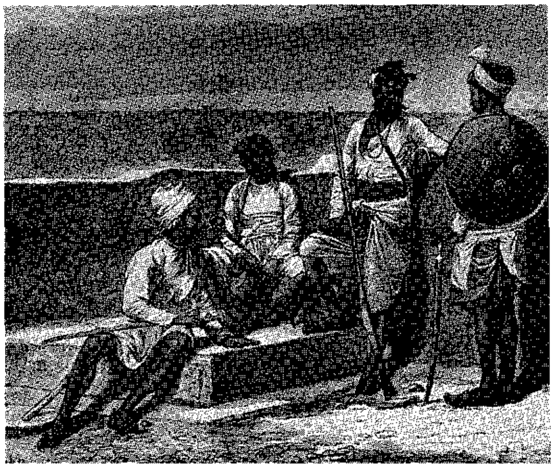
Not that fleeing the parental home is necessarily an answer for a girl in such a situation, for a number of reasons. First, her own feelings towards her parents are likely to be highly ambivalent: family bonds are extremely strong and not easily broken. The daughters love and respect their parents, whom they normally honor and obey, even though the parents inflict upon them a future which will cause nothing but the most prolonged and unutterable misery. The parents are not neglectful and incompetent, like those from the white underclass: according to their lights, they are highly solicitous for what they consider the good of their daughters.

Moreover, the "community" will condemn the girl who runs away and regard her, quite literally, as a prostitute. Since these girls are not fully integrated into the rest of British society and have hitherto led very sheltered lives, they have nowhere to go and nobody to turn to.

In the parents' scale of values, the respect of the community comes higher than the individual happiness of their offspring and indeed is a precondition of it. The need for this respect does encourage a certain standard of conduct, but it depends upon the offspring carrying out without demur the obligations laid upon them by the parents. Thus, once a marriage has been arranged, it is indissoluble—at least by the woman. I have known many young women who have been mercilessly and brutally treated by their husbands, but whose own parents recommended that they put up with the ill-treatment rather than bring public shame upon the whole family by separating from him.

A young patient of mine tried to hang herself. She had had an arranged marriage, but on the wedding night her husband had come to the doubtless mistaken conclusion that she was not a virgin and had administered a severe beating, of which the rest of his family naturally approved. Thereafter he locked her up, beat her regularly, and burned her with a cigarette lighter. She managed to run away, though her husband had said in advance that if ever he caught her doing so, or after having done so, he would kill her, to pay her back for the loss of face she would have caused him in the community. She returned to her mother, who, horrified by her behavior, said she should return to her husband at once (even if he were going to kill her), in order to preserve the good name of the family. Her other daughters would be unmarriageable if it became known in the community that this was the kind of conduct to which the family was prone. If my patient did not return to her husband, she—her mother—would commit suicide. Torn between the threatened suicide of her mother and the prospect of murder by her husband, she took to the rope.

In my quarter of the city, there are private detective agencies that specialize in locating immigrant girls who have run away from their husbands or parents. Once they are found, they are likely to be kidnapped by relatives or vigilantes—an experience which several of my patients have lived through. It is surprising how little reaction bundling someone off the street and driving away with him or her in a car causes nowadays—people do not wish to involve themselves in problems not their own. And the police are generally less than vigorous in their investigation of such cases, for fear of being criticized as racist.



I frequently meet young women whose parents, in flagrant contravention of the law, prevented them from attending school. The parents resort to a variety of subterfuges to protect their daughters from contamination by Western ideas. Complaisant doctors from the same racial and cultural group, who share the concerns of the parents, provide certificates for bogus illnesses, either of the pupil or of the pupil's mother, which require the girl's presence at home. Another technique is for the girl to be sent to school one week in four, to keep the school inspectors at bay. They, too, tread warily, for fear of being accused of acting from racial prejudice.

A patient of mine was thus kept away from school after the age of 11, for fear of being contaminated by Western notions. She was sent back to India for months at a time, so that the school lost track of her. Thanks to very superior natural intelligence, however, and surreptitious reading, for which she had a passion, she was now (at the age of 28) contemplating attending university to study law. But the rest of her story is also instructive and not untypical of what I hear.

At the age of 15 she had been taken back yet again to India, this time in the company of her parents and a 16-year-old boy who until then had been brought up in her house as her brother. When they arrived at the village in Gujurat from which her parents had emigrated, she was told that her "brother" was in fact her first cousin and that she was to marry him next day. This she said she would not do, whereupon her father beat her black and blue. She still bore the scars of her beating, and her face was still slightly asymmetrical where her cheekbone had been fractured. She maintained her opposition, however, until her father threatened to divorce her mother, casting her out, at the age of 45, into the street, unless the daughter consented to the marriage. His threat was not idle.

Reader, she married him. But still it was not enough: the relatives wanted to ensure that the marriage was consummated. Since the happy couple had been brought up as brother and sister, consummation seemed to them rather like incest, but the relatives would not take no for an answer and locked them together in a room for two weeks. They put a tape recorder under the bed to ensure that justice was done. When they discovered that still nothing had happened between them, they threatened violence: whereupon there was a happy ending, and she became pregnant.

She lived with her husband for 12 years after their return to England, never loving him as a husband but fearing to leave him because of her father's reaction. The husband, who likewise had no love for his wife, feared to leave because of his own relatives' reaction. Eventually they did separate but maintained the fiction that they still lived together, a fiction whose verisimilitude it took great expense of effort and ingenuity to maintain—a true expense of spirit in a waste of shame.

One of the conceits of multiculturalism is that the intolerance against which it is supposedly the sovereign remedy is a characteristic only of the host society. In the impoverished imagination of the multiculturalists, all those who do not belong by birth to the predominant culture are engaged in a united struggle against its oppressive and illegitimate hegemony.

The reality, in my experience, is somewhat different. For example, relations between immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and from Jamaica, at least in my city, are often far from amicable, the hostility extending to the generation born in England. Indian families are often dismayed (to put it mildly) when their daughters choose Jamaican lovers. I know of two who have been killed by their close families to redeem family honor in the eyes of their community. The first was hanged at home; the second was taken back to Pakistan, where she was beaten to death, the local police regarding this as the correct procedure under the circumstances.

Religious tolerance is not a value universally admired. Not only is it not emulated or practiced, but the urbane skepticism, indeed the lack of absolute faith, that it implies is regarded by many as anathema. Relations between the Hindu Sikhs and the Muslim Indians, for example, are particularly fraught, and scarcely any greater disaster can befall a family—in the eyes of its respective community—than for one of its own young people to fall in love with a young person of the other religion. The telluric emotions aroused by such liaisons often result in violence. Scarcely a week goes by without a terrible or tragic case coming to my attention.

A pleasant and intelligent Sikh girl, aged 18, was asked by her family to accompany her aged grandmother back home in a taxi, in which she was then to return. The taxi firm was run

COMMON GROUND

WHERE CAN
CONSERVATIVES
& LIBERALS
AGREE?

PANELISTS INCLUDE:
Myron Magnet
Michael Kinsley
Taylor Branch
Walter Olson
Heather Mac Donald
Kay Hymowitz
Mickey Kaus
James Fallows
Jason DeParle
Nicholas Lemann
Charles Peters
Fred Siegel

April 19, 1995

THE UNIVERSITY CLUB
1135 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C.
9:00 AM – 5:30 PM
$50 per person (lunch included)

FOR TICKETS write:
Conference
The Washington Monthly
1611 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
or call
THE MANHATTAN INSTITUTE
at (212) 599-7000

Sponsored by
THE MANHATTAN INSTITUTE
CITY JOURNAL
THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

by Sikhs, who not only acted as transporters of the public but as vigilantes and guardians of their community's honor. The driver in this case reported to the girl's brother on her arrival home that, during the return journey through a neighborhood inhabited mainly by Muslims, she had waved to a Muslim boy. The brother, fearing the worst, called her into his room and asked whether she had in fact done so. She denied it, but he did not believe her. He took out a baseball bat (practically no baseball is played in Britain, but plenty of bats are sold as weapons and lie detectors) and tried to beat what he considered the truth out of her. She later appeared in my hospital with a badly fractured skull, but maintained to the police on her recovery that she had been assaulted on her doorstep by person or persons unknown.

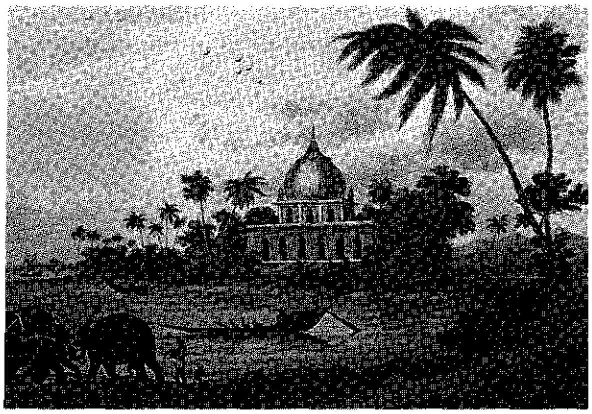
A young Sikh boy formed a liaison with a Muslim girl. He was an outgoing lad, a good student and fine athlete, who represented his school and his city at several different sports. He used to meet his girlfriend clandestinely, in the flat of a young Muslim friend of his—or someone whom he had considered his friend. The friend, however, telephoned the girl's brothers and asked how long they were going to allow their family to be dishonored.

On his way to his evening work, the Sikh boy was attacked with machetes by the girl's three brothers. They knocked him to the ground, threatened to cut his throat next time, and hacked repeatedly at both his arms. This took place within a hundred yards of my hospital's main entrance. He had a compound fracture of his humerus, and so many of his tendons were cut that he will never recover full use of his hands and arms.

The three brothers were duly caught and tried. Unfortunately, they were granted bail, and when it was clear that the trial was certain to result in a verdict of guilty, they failed to attend the court and were sentenced in absentia to long terms of imprisonment. My patient went into hiding in a city 400 miles away, fearing to leave his flat there and sleeping always with a knife under his pillow. He had received information from a reliable source that the three brothers were still looking for him and would kill him if they found him. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the story is that the three brothers were not regarded as delinquents by other members of their community but as having behaved in a thoroughly honorable and decent way. That they had broken the law in pursuing their vendetta, thus risking imprisonment, only added to their honor: they were spirited boys to be proud of.

Of course my work brings me into contact with the most dramatic instances of such caste, religious, and cultural intolerance, but I could tell very many such stories, the protagonists of which also know of many similar instances unknown to me: thus I am seeing the tip of an iceberg, not—to change the metaphor—the last survivors of a rare and endangered species.

I am by no means concluding that the cultures from which these patients come are worthless, that there is nothing to be learned from them (for example, about the role of family solidarity in enabling many children who live in physically poor conditions to achieve at school), or even that there is nothing whatever to be said in favor of the scale of values they espouse. When I talk to the parents who believe in that scale of values, they often speak most eloquently and intelligently of the social devastation they see around them among the white underclass, for whom human relationships are kaleidoscopic in their changeability, and whose lives are built on the most shifting of sands. I can quite understand that what they see only reinforces their determination to live according to their own beliefs, and that they do not want their children to become like that underclass.



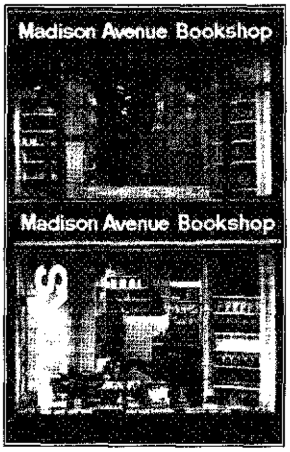
Nevertheless, the painful and inescapable fact remains that many aspects of the cultures which they are trying to preserve are incompatible not only with the mores of a liberal democracy but with its juridical and philosophical foundations. No amount of hand-wringing or euphemism can alter this fact. To allow certain groups to refuse to send their girls to school, on the grounds that it is not in their culture to do so, would be to grant such groups the kind of corporate rights that will inevitably result in chronic civil war, with every conceivable group claiming such rights. Individuals will have to forgo altogether the freedoms in which Western liberal democracy believes.

The idea that it is possible to base a society on no cultural or philosophical presuppositions at all, or, alternatively, that all such presuppositions may be treated equally so that no choice has to be made between them, is absurd. Immigrants enrich—have enriched—our culture, but they do so by addition rather than by subtraction or division. ●

THE CIGAR® BAR
AT BEEKMAN BAR AND BOOKS

FEATURING THE WORLD'S
FINEST CIGARS EXCLUSIVELY
FROM THE HUMIDOR OF
ALFRED DUNHILL

889 FIRST AVENUE
AT 50TH STREET, NYC
212-980-9314


Madison Avenue Bookshop

833 Madison Avenue
(between 69th & 70th Sts.)
New York, New York 10021
535-6130

Disordered Policies

To the editor:
Sally Satel's "Treating Insanity Reasonably" and Heather Mac Donald's "Welfare's Last Vietnam" [Winter 1995] form a terrific one-two punch. Dr. Satel's article illustrates how deinstitutionalization of mentally ill individuals failed in the past by fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of serious mental illnesses, which we now know are brain diseases, and by permitting civil rights lawyers to change commitment laws so that mentally ill individuals are guaranteed the right to remain mentally ill. Ms. Mac Donald's article illustrates how these past mistakes are being continued in the present by mis-categorizing addictions and childhood behavioral problems as "diseases," thereby qualifying the person for SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, and other perpetual federal disbursements.

A Martian arriving in New York today would be extremely perplexed by the mental illness treatment system that has evolved. We regularly release people who have brain diseases from hospitals without insuring that they get the medicine they need to prevent their illness from recurring. When they do relapse, we house them in public shelters, some of which use the same hospital buildings that were closed down when these people left the hospitals (Ward's Island, for example). We reward drug and alcohol addicts with payments for continuing to be addicted, and we reward the families of children who misbehave with payments as long as they continue to misbehave. The Martian might well wonder just who really has disordered thinking.

E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.
Health Research Group
Public Citizen
Washington, D.C.

To the editor:
Contrary to Ms. Mac Donald's claims, federal disability programs do not reward people for a "chaotic upbringing," lack of a "work ethic," or "simply antisocial or even criminal behavior." In fact, especially for the population that is her principal focus—people with mental illness, deprived of the opportunity for either rehabilitation or work—disability provides a bedrock of support.

Ms. Mac Donald writes that a 1982 case in Minnesota was successful in "challenging the Social Security Administration's evaluation of non-severe" mental impairments. In fact, the plaintiff class in that case was composed exclusively of people whom SSA itself had identified as having severe impairments. The most devastating evidence came from SSA's medical director in Chicago. He wrote in a memorandum that it was "practically impossible" to gain benefits "for any individual whose thought processes are not completely disorganized, [who] is not blatantly psychotic, [and who] is not having a psychiatric emergency requiring immediate hospitalization."

So Congress demanded new rules. In writing them, SSA, far from departing from "traditional medical impairments," based them on medical criteria from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* and functional standards derived from reviewing psychiatric literature and consulting with the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and other experts in the field. People who lack a "work ethic" or who have only a mild impairment are not eligible for benefits under these rules.

Children's SSI is designed to provide benefits only to the most severely disabled children. Ms. Mac Donald's charge that any child claiming emotional disturbance is eligible is certainly not supported by the eligibility rules. The allegation that non-disabled or only mildly disabled children are being granted benefits certainly warrants investigation and correction, but it is no basis to fiddle with the rules.

In the end, I agree with Ms. Mac Donald that the real question is about dependency. No disability program should foster dependency. But in a society where access to rehabilitation for people with mental illness is scandalously limited and where the work incentives

Letters

of the disability programs are inadequate, denying subsistence benefits will not end dependency.

Arthur T. Meyerson, M.D.
Clinical Director
Community Mental Health Center
Newark, N.J.

To the editor:
While it is surely valid to cite advocacy lawyers and the growing culture of entitlement as the primary culprits in the increase in disability enrollment that Ms. Mac Donald describes, these factors do not account for the entire problem.

Virtually every public agency that deals with the consequences of social disorganization—from the courts and schools to family service agencies to mental hospitals—is experiencing an unmanageable explosion of demand. These institutions are not being overwhelmed by crafty advocates and wily grifters; they are being swamped by genuine human misery at just the time that tax resources are becoming more scarce.

Schools, courts, family support agencies, and mental hospitals are not conducting outreach activities. They are doing triage, writing off people whom a decade ago they would have tried to help. The urban dustbin is growing ever more full, so it should not be surprising that disability programs are absorbing some of the overflow. As we reform the disability programs, we must also keep the safety net under those for whom other alternatives have failed.

Hal Bergan
President
Bergan & Associates
Madison, Wis.

Heather Mac Donald responds:
Dr. Meyerson denies that federal disability is shifting its focus from medical to social pathologies. I would refer him to the case of Robin Smith of Brooklyn. Now in her late thirties, Smith has been addicted to heroin since her early teens. She dropped out of high school at 14 to have her first child; she has since had four more. She has worked only once, but quit after six months.

DOM AND KN
SHALL BE TH
ANDREW BORDWIN

Smith applied for SSI benefits in 1986, claiming that her asthma, bad nerves, and drug use prevented her from working. She provided no evidence of severe asthma, but a psychologist diagnosed her with "antisocial trends that result in disturbing her ability to function in the society as a productive or self-supporting member." In 1991, a federal judge awarded her benefits for heroin use. Many of those who have entered the rolls over the past decade may indeed be unable to function in society, but often that inability to function is self-induced. I fully agree that mental illness can tragically incapacitate. But it short-changes the truly mentally ill when the government devotes limited resources to problems that originate with an individual's bad decisions.

Children's disability may well have been designed for only severely disabled children, as Dr. Meyerson claims, but it is not working that way in practice. Teachers tell of parents who, after failing to show up for a single parent-teacher conference, suddenly beat down the school door when they get wind of the SSI program. It is not the absence of SSI benefits that is preventing such parents from caring for their children, but rather the parents' own irresponsibility.

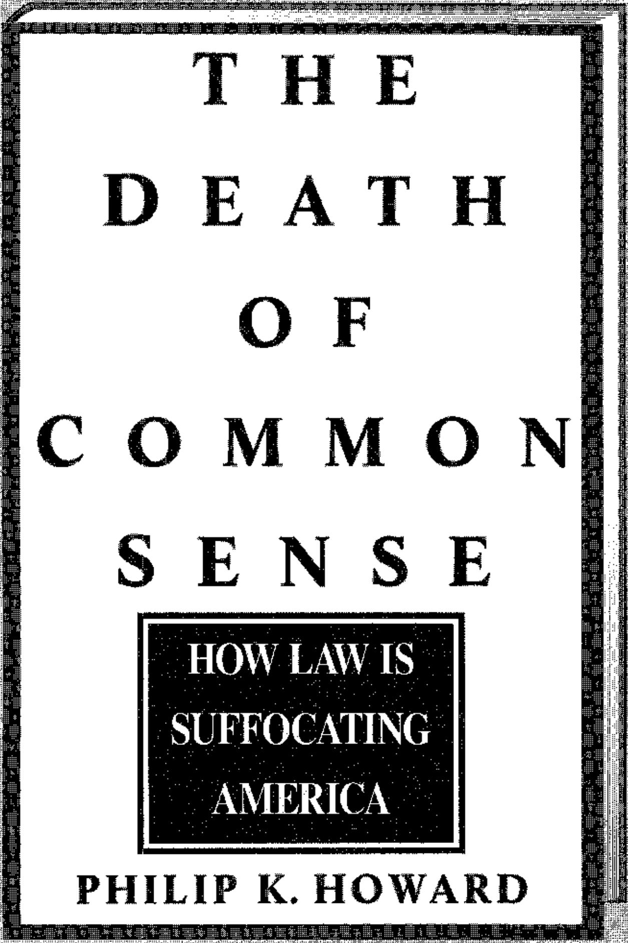
Mr. Bergan and I do not fundamentally disagree. No one would dispute that there is an enormous amount of distress in the inner cities. But to ask the disability program to alleviate it is misguided. The program has been pulled in so many directions that its original directive—to assist those who truly suffer from severe disabilities—has been lost. ●

City Journal *welcomes letters to the editor. Our address:* City Journal, *52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017-3802.*

"One of the most important, thought-provoking books I've read in years," says Andrew Tobias. "It will grip you from the very first page."

Author
Philip K. Howard

Photo credit© Charles Nesbit


THE DEATH OF COMMON SENSE

HOW LAW IS SUFFOCATING AMERICA

PHILIP K. HOWARD

"What Mr. Howard is trying to do with this thoughtful little book is drive us all sane."
—Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, *The New York Times*

"Every doctor and teacher... every judge...every banker and businessman...every manager—every taxpayer—will find *The Death of Common Sense* a blood-boiler.
—Andrew Tobias

"A wildly important book which should change the direction of public debate in this country."
—Andrew Heiskell, former publisher of Time, Inc.

"A brilliant diagnosis...forceful, trenchant and eloquent."
—Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

RANDOM HOUSE

Contributors

David Brooks is features editor of the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page.

Theodore Dalrymple is a physician who regularly sees patients in an English prison. He is a columnist for the London *Spectator* and a frequent contributor to the *Daily Telegraph*.

David Gelernter, author of the forthcoming *1939: The Lost World of the Fair* (Free Press), teaches computer science at Yale University.

Kay S. Hymowitz, a *City Journal* contributing editor, has written about children and education for *The New Republic*, *Dissent*, the *New York Times*, and *Newsday*.

Carolyn Lochhead is Washington bureau chief for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

David Garrard Lowe is a cultural historian who writes and lectures on American civilization. His books include *Lost Chicago* and *Stanford White's New York*.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. Her articles have also appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Criterion*.

Mitchell L. Moss is director of the Center for Urban Research at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Daniel Seligman is a contributing editor of *Fortune*, for which he writes the "Keeping Up" column.

Kenneth Silber writes about politics and economics. His articles have appeared in *Commentary*, the *Washington Times*, *Insight*, *Reason*, and other publications.

Roger Starr is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former member of the *New York Times* editorial board. He has also served as New York City's housing and development administrator.

Sol Stern has written for *New York Newsday* and the *Wall Street Journal* and has served as a policy analyst for the New York City and New York State governments.

Correction: Berenice Abbott's "A New York Portfolio" in the Winter 1995 issue is from the Berenice Abbott Portfolio © Commerce Graphic Ltd. Inc.

City Journal (ISSN 1060-8540) is published four times a year by the Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017; Telephone: (212) 599-7000. Subscription rates: One year: $24.00; Two years: $38.00; Individual issues: $6.95; Reprints: $3.00. Distributed in the United States by Bernard DeBoer, Inc., 113 East Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110, (201) 667-9300; Fine Print Distributors, 6448 Highway 290 East, Suite B104, Austin, TX 78723, (512) 452-8709; Ubiquity Distributors, 604 DeGraw Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217, (718) 875-8047; International Periodical Distributors, 674 Via de la Valle, Suite 200, Solano Beach, CA 92075, (619) 481-5928.

Signed articles express the views of their authors and are intended solely to inform and broaden public debate. They are not intended to aid or hinder legislation before legislative bodies at the municipal, state, or federal level. © 1995 by the Manhattan Institute, Inc.

A Grander Grand Central

David Garrard Lowe

Grand Central Terminal! What images those words conjure up: Gloria Swanson surrounded by photographers as she boards the sleekly streamlined "Twentieth Century Limited"; General Eisenhower emerging from the "North Shore Limited" to confide his political plans to a bouquet of microphones; the Pullmans of the "Commodore Vanderbilt" made up to carry Winston Churchill or F. Scott Fitzgerald into the heartland. Closer to home are the commuters of the twenties and thirties, coming in from Westport and Greenwich, all hats and chesterfields, looking like *Esquire* ads when *Esquire* ads were something to look at.

When, in February 1913, the curtain rose on Whitney Warren's Beaux Arts beauty, it revealed a granite and limestone palazzo consciously designed as a stage set—an insistent proclamation to the throngs passing through it that they were not in Kansas anymore, that they had set foot in America's premier metropolis. Great cities require great spaces to define the extent of their urbanity. If the Woolworth Building is the Cathedral of Commerce, then Grand Central is the Basilica of Transport. Its vast concourse, arching up a breathtaking 150 feet, speaks of sacred space. Grand Central has had its bad times. After 1947, the terminal's traffic began to ebb before the airplane and automobile. In 1962, the 59-story Pan Am (now MetLife) Building rose just to the north, dwarfing Whitney Warren's chateauesque Grand Central Office Building (now the Helmsley Building), whose profile had been a delight of Park Avenue.

Grand Central's current custodians, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Metro North Railroad, have begun an imaginative refurbishing, cleaning and illuminating the exterior, clearing away shops and advertising displays that cluttered the interior, and restoring the Waiting Room to its original, dazzling appearance. Now they propose to spend $113.8 million to complete the work. A plan by architects Beyer Blinder Belle calls for sweeping away the last of the helter-skelter interior construction, cleaning the terminal's faux Caen limestone walls, and revitalizing the entire complex with new commercial spaces. One of the best proposals envisions a restaurant on the now almost inaccessible east balcony, to be reached by a new stairway.

The plan does stumble now and then. Take the decoration of the main concourse's ceiling, depicting the constellations, complete with electrically lit stars. Due to water damage, in 1944 the mural was copied on fiberboard and attached to the ceiling. Now it is proposed to restore the copy. But the ceiling has always been one of the terminal's weak points. With a vigorous revival of realistic painting now under way, why not have one of the new realists devise an entirely new decorative scheme, one that could retell the history of the New York Central or celebrate New York itself?

Similarly, while the idea of creating a new Lexington Avenue entrance is admirable, the flat, banal design, with unimaginative rectangular openings and an ugly, utilitarian canopy, manages to unite some of the worst elements of late 1950s office buildings. The entrance should at least whisperingly echo Warren's exuberant 42nd Street facade, with its paired columns, its high arched openings, and its bold, clock-crowned cornice. The new entrance is to be topped by an undecorated clock. Why not commission a good representational sculptor to give both the new entrance and its clock some panache?

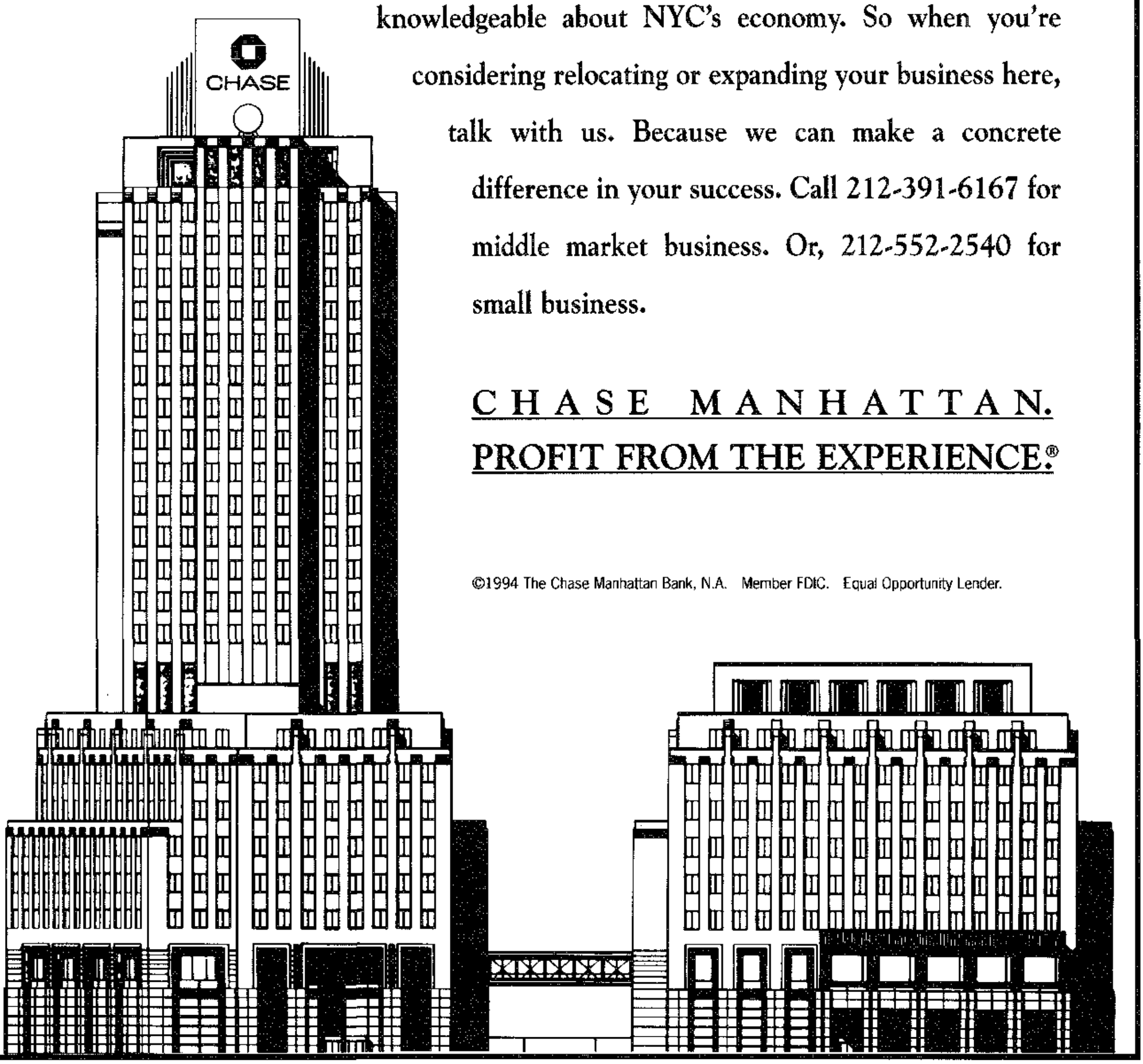
Yet how wonderful that Grand Central is on the brink of being grand again! Perhaps when one sits in the new east balcony restaurant, it will be possible to believe that the "Twentieth Century" has once more glided in: there will be Miss Swanson, on her way to check in at the old Ritz-Carlton, to quaff at the Stork Club, to punish the parquet at El Morocco. All those places have vanished; how lucky Grand Central has not. ●

A concrete example of our commitment to New York City.

CHASE believes in NYC. That's why we built our Metro Tech Service Center here. The 6500 Chase people who work there play a major role in serving small and middle market businesses in New York City. That's why we're quite knowledgeable about NYC's economy. So when you're considering relocating or expanding your business here, talk with us. Because we can make a concrete difference in your success. Call 212-391-6167 for middle market business. Or, 212-552-2540 for small business.

CHASE MANHATTAN.
PROFIT FROM THE EXPERIENCE.®

©1994 The Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A. Member FDIC. Equal Opportunity Lender.



OUR FINANCIAL SKILLS HELPED ONE GOLD MINING COMPANY FIND THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. *The AIG Companies serve one of the world's most successful gold mining companies with excess casualty and directors and officers insurance. But when management saw they needed protection against falling gold prices and rising diesel fuel costs, we had a chance to show a different mettle. With a one-million-ounce gold hedging facility. And a series of fixed-for-floating-rate fuel transactions known as financially settled swaps. Both arranged by our AIG Trading Group Inc. So the company was able to lock in reasonable costs and healthy profits for a good long time. By consistently providing the definitive response to risks like these, we light the way for one customer after another.*

AIG WORLD LEADERS IN INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES.

American International Group, Inc., Dept. A, 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

75th Anniversary